



2009-2010 Accountability Report

Transmittal Form

Organization Name: **South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department**

Date of Submission: **September 15, 2010**

Organization Director: **Barbara G. Hollis**

Organization Contact Person: **Mark G. Wade**

Contact Person's
Telephone Number: **(803) 896-6503**

I. Executive Summary

1. Mission, Visions and Values

The mission of the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD) is to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

Investing in South Carolinians with disabilities offers a high-yield return. The public vocational rehabilitation program converts people reliant on government assistance into self-sufficient citizens who have jobs, purchase goods and services, save for the future, and pay taxes that quickly reimburse the funds spent on their rehabilitation.

SCVRD continues to implement customer-focused initiatives and accountability measures designed to add value to its services and to allocate its limited resources to achieve maximum impact.

The agency visions:

- All staff will be committed to the agency's mission, values and visions.
- Technology will be used to provide maximum benefits to our staff and clients.
- We will be the leader in innovative, individualized customer service that contributes to successful employment outcomes.
- Our relationships with business, industry and all levels of government will be positive and productive.
- We will provide quality service in an atmosphere of trust, sincerity and commitment.
- We will provide professional development opportunities in order to develop and retain exceptional employees.
- We will demonstrate accountability through the efficient and effective use of the resources entrusted to us.
- We will provide our customers with the tools, services and products that will prepare them to compete successfully in the modern workplace.

The agency values:

- Persons with disabilities who strive to achieve and maintain competitive employment.
- Highly qualified staff members who are technically competent, personally accountable, communicate effectively and work together in a professional manner.
- Partnerships with business and industry that provide employment and contract service opportunities for our clients.
- Relationships with other human service agencies that provide increased service opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Accountability to taxpayers through efficient and effective use of the resources entrusted to us.

2. Major achievements from the past year:

- The department rehabilitated 7,671 people with disabilities into employment in FY2010 and served a total of 44,293 people (including all applicants and clients whose services carry over to successive years). Based on 2009 cost benefit analysis it is estimated that

these rehabilitated clients will pay back \$3.33 for every vocational rehabilitation dollar spent on them by becoming taxpayers instead of tax consumers. It will take only 5.5 years for those clients to repay the cost of their rehabilitation, an 18.1% rate of return.

- The department added 56 cooperative agreements in FY2010, continuing its steady growth in this area over the past several years. This has resulted from an increased emphasis on strengthening ties with non-profit agencies and with other state agencies to provide their clients with individualized rehabilitation services leading to employment, particularly the One-Stop centers; Department of Mental Health; Department of Disabilities and Special Needs; Department of Education; Department of Corrections; Department of Juvenile Justice; Probation, Parole and Pardon Services; and Department of Social Services..
- The department gained \$631,088 in reimbursements from the Social Security Administration. This reimbursement is a direct reflection of savings realized by Social Security because the department's clients became competitively employed and no longer rely on SSI/SSDI benefits.
- SCVRD began providing comprehensive services to clients from nine counties in the Upstate at its new location in Lyman. Specialized services at the Bryant Center include occupational therapy, physical therapy, pain management, brain injury services, rehabilitation engineering, a prosthetics and orthotics clinic, computer training and nutritional counseling to help clients explore and develop their vocational strengths and abilities. These services were previously available to Upstate clients only by traveling to Columbia.
- SCVRD continued to focus on enhancement of services to high school students with disabilities. Without early intervention, that population is in a position of great vulnerability to a cycle of poverty and reliance on government benefits. VR counselors are assigned to each high school. In FY2010 the department served 9,671 clients in the 16-to-22 age group. Highlights included:
 - Specialized training for all transition staff, with a focus on Guideposts for Success, evidence-based practices for school-based preparatory experiences, career preparation and work-based learning experiences, youth development and leadership, connecting activities and family involvement and supports.
 - The YES Program (Youth Employment Services, a grant from the U.S. Department of Education), is designed to improve post-secondary employment outcomes of youths with disabilities. This now includes schools in Beaufort, Lancaster, Edgefield and Spartanburg counties.
 - SCVRD's Transition Employability Specialist Program expanded and now includes eight counties where specialists in co-funded positions serve students with disabilities on campus.
 - Cooperative agreements with the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School were implemented to provide VR services to at-risk youth. Specialists in co-funded positions serve eligible students on campus.
 - The department's High School/High Tech program at 12 locations around the state served 532 diploma-track students with disabilities through high-interest,

high-energy activities including internships, job shadowing and tours of colleges and businesses.

- Disability Mentoring Day expanded to all SCVRD offices throughout the state; 221 students with disabilities were paired for a day of mentoring with professionals working in careers of interest to the students.
- SCVRD's Skilled Workforce Apprentice Training (SWAT) program continued to expand throughout the state, offering training and employment opportunities in careers with good wages and benefits, such as computer assisted design, digital imaging, auto repair and pharmacy technicians. At the end of FY2010, 62 clients had been hired by these companies and 38 employers had become involved in the apprenticeship program.
- A significant technological undertaking, the department's electronic case management system continued to be developed. FY 2010 marked the first full year of centralized compliance in the eligibility process, which led to improved performance in compliance percentages. This initiative enhances quality control by enabling real-time monitoring of compliance with case service policies and regulations, which will lead to better employment outcomes for clients and increased efficiencies in operations. The vocational assessment component will be launched in FY2011.
- The department's Human Resources Development unit launched LOTIS (Learner Online Training and Information Site). This web-based site offers online staff training modules about specific disabilities, safety, ethics, employee orientation and other topics of importance to job performance. The modules are interactive and require completion of quizzes and assignments. LOTIS is updated with new modules regularly and is not only effective in providing staff with vital tools for success, but also saves money and time as some training can now be done at an employee's desk rather than by traveling.
- The department implemented the South Carolina Enterprise and Information System (SCEIS) as required of all state agencies, activating the financial and procurement components in November 2009 and the human resources and payroll components in June 2010. Implementation of these changes was extremely challenging for SCVRD due to the nature of its client service provision and local operations. A large number of staff members in the central office as well as local offices throughout the state diligently worked long hours for extended periods of time to prepare for and then carry out the conversion.
- Other technological enhancements that enhanced client services included workstations for client work skills development and testing, a job match system to match clients with jobs based on skills and specific employer needs, and upgrades that allowed staff to serve clients better from remote locations. Staff efficiency, effectiveness and safety benefited from customized software upgrades, addition of Outlook Web Access to enable email use without an agency computer, cost-saving voice over IP telephones in several locations, an interoffice emergency notification system, and a new firewall and hard drive encryption to protect agency data.
- The Social Security Disability Determination Services program continued providing effective and efficient evaluation of claims for disability benefits. During FY 2010, the division's documentation net accuracy levels exceeded the national goal. The program was

able to increase the overall initial allowance rate, which will result in fewer cases for appeal and assist in reducing backlogs.

3. Key strategic goals:

- **Standards of Excellence** used by SCVRD to maintain an organizational focus on performance and to guide systematic evaluation and improvement of key processes. The nine standards encompass all key facets of the agency's operations, including client service delivery, Program Integrity and its accompanying performance measures at the local and state level, balance in the training centers, maintenance of facilities, relationships with partners, transition services and the predominant goal of placement of clients into meaningful competitive employment. (*See pg. 13*)
- **Partnerships** to enhance agency outreach and service provision, including partnerships with other agencies to coordinate services, increase successful closures, and enhance job training opportunities for clients.
- **Centralization** of targeted roles and **redirection of personnel** from those roles into positions that promote a higher level of direct client service at the local level, especially for individuals with brain injury, spinal cord injury, severe and persistent mental illness, those who are deaf and hard of hearing, and students transitioning from school to work—the most significant disabilities or underserved disability populations.
- **Professional Development and Leadership Program (PDLP)** to transfer organizational knowledge and develop future leaders in light of significant retirements among management staff. The PDLP creates an environment that fosters excellence by aligning agency needs with individual career goals.
- **Development and implementation of an enhanced case management system (CMS)** to follow the natural progression of the rehabilitation process and support integrated service system in an intuitive and user-friendly format.
- **Return on investment**, based on a set of measures that reflect the economic impact of competitive employment on clients through their own gain in financial achievement and through the return on the taxpayer investment.
- **Enhanced staff training** to better prepare staff to help clients achieve employment success, through utilization of disability-specific training modules within a new electronic learning management system.

4. Key strategic challenges

- **Maximizing financial and human resources to achieve the agency's mission** by using limited financial resources in the most efficient and effective manner. This year the agency's recurring state funding has dropped to its lowest level in 30 years and the impact has been seen in some of the agency's results. *A critical factor in meeting this challenge is retention of enough state funding to meet the agency's current federal match, which brings nearly \$4 in federal funding for each state dollar appropriated. The agency's base state funding level is currently \$4.4 million below the level needed to maintain its federal match.* To address funding limitations, the agency continues to examine its staffing patterns and roles. Some roles are being redefined to effect cost savings and make the best

use of local staff in service delivery areas. SCVRD continues to look for ways to be efficient and still meet client needs, such as reducing part-time staff hours, implementing hiring delays, reducing/consolidating travel, and limiting equipment purchases.

- **Finding jobs for clients in a period of economic downturn and double-digit unemployment rates**, and educating employers on the financial and human resource advantages of hiring people with disabilities.
- **Maintenance of facilities and equipment.** Many of the agency's owned and operated facilities are more than 20 years old and in need of repairs to continue to serve agency clients and business partners. Several of these projects have been delayed unless operational and/or safety issues required action. There are also long-term needs to construct new facilities where disability populations are unserved or underserved.
- **Enhance stability in the management and daily operations of VR service delivery.** The department must utilize its Professional Development and Leadership Program and other initiatives to meet agency needs and foster an environment of opportunity for staff, including innovative and technologically advanced approaches to training (learning management system, competency-based online modules). Conversion to the South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS) has presented significant challenges in implementation and staff training requirements. While the agency recognizes its long-term benefits, SCEIS has required extensive time and resources.
- **Serving individuals with significant disabilities.** Positions saved through centralization are being redirected into direct client service delivery roles focused on identifying and meeting the employment needs of individuals with brain injury, spinal cord injury, severe and persistent mental illness, clients who are deaf and hard of hearing, and students transitioning from school to work.
- **Maximizing partnerships.** The agency places great emphasis on partnerships with other agencies to coordinate services, partnerships with business and industry, and partnerships with past clients to enhance services and promote the agency's accomplishments. The number of interagency partnerships continues to grow.
- **Training center balance.** The agency's 24 work training centers provide a valuable source of revenue to support the provision of job preparedness for clients. The centers seek to balance quality rehabilitation services that would be of the most benefit to clients with the business partnerships that provide the means for offering these vital services.
- **Social Security disability challenges.** Nationally the Social Security Administration has seen unprecedented increases in applications for SSA disability programs. In South Carolina, applications in the first quarter of the federal fiscal year increased by approximately 30% from the previous year. Due to the unprecedented increase in applications, SSA developed a National Capacity Strategy, whereby SSA claims could be processed by federal components. In March, SSA field offices began sending 325 applications for disability to federal processing centers for adjudication. SSA also authorized an additional 70 new hires for SCVRD's Disability Determination Services this fiscal year. With this increase in staff, an additional challenge is the lack of experience for many of the program's adjudicators—47% percent of them have less than two years experience.

5. Use of accountability report

The department uses the annual accountability report as documentation of its continuous improvement efforts and performance measures. The accountability report is a valuable tool in monitoring progress and identifying gaps in performance. An extension of the use of the accountability report is the agency's application for the Governor's Quality Award, the state-level Baldrige award administered by the South Carolina Quality Forum and state chamber of commerce. In FY2008 the Forum recognized SCVRD as a Gold Achiever (the agency was a Silver Achiever when it applied in 2001 and a Gold Achiever in 2004). The Committee on Rehabilitation Excellence (CORE) has used the resulting extensive feedback reports to drive continuous improvement efforts, such as the development of the Standards of Excellence and refinement of the Program Integrity model.

II. Organizational Profile

The public vocational rehabilitation program is the oldest and most successful federal/state human service program in the nation. South Carolina's vocational rehabilitation program began in 1927 and for a considerable number of years has enjoyed top performance rankings nationally for providing effective service to clients. The department enables eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment, converting dependent tax consumers with disabilities into independent, working taxpayers.

1. Main products, services and delivery methods

- Eligible applicants with disabilities have a program of services coordinated by their counselors at one of 20 area offices and 24 work training centers throughout the state. Together the client and VR staff develop an individualized plan for employment. Career options are explored and the client receives extensive counseling and guidance. Other services may include restoration services, classes to enhance employability, job preparedness training at the department's work training center, or additional services leading to job placement. Successful, suitable employment in alignment with client interests is the outcome measure.
- Many clients with significant physical disabilities benefit from the department's Center for Comprehensive Programs in West Columbia, which includes an evaluation center to determine vocational potential; pain management program; brain injury program; muscular development program; rehabilitation technology program which uses an engineering approach to overcome employment barriers; and information technology training program which provides clients with top-level training for technology jobs. Many of these same services are provided to Upstate clients at the department's Bryant Center in Lyman.
- The department has specialized services such as cardiac rehabilitation; deaf and hard of hearing services; job retention services for employees of businesses throughout the state whose jobs are jeopardized by disabling conditions; supported employment (worksites job coaching); and substance abuse treatment at two SCVRD treatment centers.
- The department's 24 work training centers provide vital job training for clients and a cost-effective outsource option for more than 450 business and industry partners.

- The Social Security Disability Determination Services program processes Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance claims for the Social Security Administration.

2. Key customer segments and their requirements/expectations

- **Primary customers (clients):** The department mission centers on employment of people with disabilities. It does not provide lifelong services. To be eligible, an applicant must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially interferes with his or her ability to work. The person must also require and be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services that would lead to permanent, competitive employment. The department is unique in that its primary customers are people with more than 135 different physically and mentally disabling conditions. The client's expectation is to receive appropriate services that will result in competitive employment. In 2009-2010, SCVRD placed 7,671 people with disabilities into employment.
- **Business and industry partners:** This includes employers who expect the agency to provide well-qualified, reliable employees; companies that provide outsource work for clients in job readiness training and require high-quality, timely, and cost-effective production; companies that utilize job retention services, which help people whose jobs are jeopardized by disabling conditions; and businesses taking part in SCVRD work assessment, training, mentoring and job shadowing services.

3. Other key stakeholders

- **State and local agencies and private, non-profit organizations:** SCVRD has hundreds of cooperative agreements with organizations throughout the state. These agency partners expect SCVRD to provide the employment outcome component that their clients need to round out the scope of services that bring newfound independence for people with disabilities.
- **Taxpayers/legislators:** The agency must be accountable in its service delivery and its practices, and provide results that show efficiency and effectiveness.

4. Key suppliers and partners

- **Referral sources:** SCVRD needs strong ties with referral sources to generate client applications for services. These sources include other state, federal and local agencies, non-profit organizations, the medical community, school systems, colleges and universities, alcohol and drug programs, correctional facilities, the military, and employers.
- **VR Partners:** This group of successfully rehabilitated "alumni" clients provides support, including advocacy for the program, advice and mentoring.
- **Vendors:** This includes training institutions, physicians, hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, orthotic/prosthetic and hearing aid dealers, and miscellaneous retailers. These customers help the department provide appropriate services to its clients and in return they expect the department to carry out efficient and timely transactions.
- **Social Security Administration:** SCVRD's Social Security Disability Determination Services program adjudicates SSI and SSDI claims for the Social Security Administration.

5. Operation locations

- The department's administrative headquarters and Center for Comprehensive Programs are located in West Columbia. The department has alcohol and drug abuse treatment facilities in Florence and Greenville.

- Area Office/Work Training Center combinations (primary entry points) are located in:

Aiken	Conway	Orangeburg
Anderson/Seneca*	Florence/Kingtree*	Rock Hill/Lancaster*
Bennettsville/Hartsville*	Greenville	Spartanburg/Gaffney*
Beaufort	Greenwood	Sumter
Camden	Laurens	Walterboro
Charleston	Lyman **	West Columbia
Columbia	Moncks Corner	

* *area offices with two work training centers*

** *Lyman location has an area office combined with specialized comprehensive services.*

Satellite offices operated by the area offices listed above are in: Dillon, Georgetown, Greer, and Newberry.

The department also fully participates in 20 comprehensive One-Stop centers operated by Workforce Investment boards, and has a presence in 40 satellite One-Stop centers.

The Social Security Disability Determination Services program has a central office in West Columbia, regional offices in Charleston, Greenville and West Columbia, and a specialized unit for Medicaid claims in Lexington.

6. Staff size

- At the end of FY2010, the department had 1,132 employees in full-time equivalent positions and 329 employees in temporary positions. Two of the full-time positions are unclassified (commissioner and assistant commissioner for administrative services).

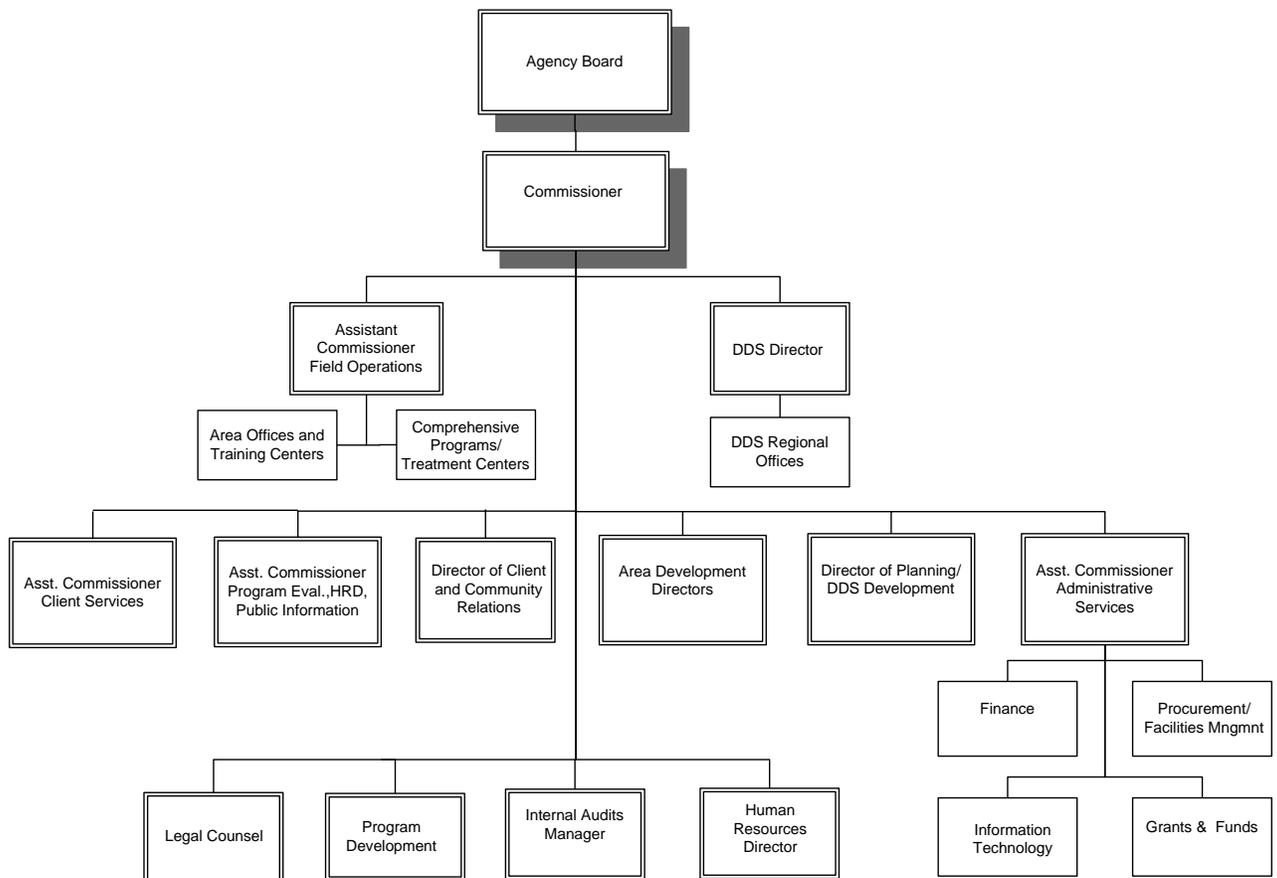
7. Regulatory environment

- The department operates under the regulations of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. This is part of the Workforce Investment Act, which has additional regulations on the department's participation in One-Stop employment centers throughout the state. The vocational rehabilitation program is administered nationally by the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), in Washington, D.C.
- While RSA provides regulatory oversight, the department is a state agency, designated by the state as the vocational rehabilitation agency for citizens with disabilities, with the exception of people who are blind (served by the S.C. Commission for the Blind). The department is therefore governed by the state's executive and legislative branches and the South Carolina Code of Laws.
- In addition to RSA and state government regulations, the department adheres to OSHA safety standards and Department of Labor standards in all facilities, and DHEC and National Institute for the Severely Handicapped (NISH) regulations in some facilities.

8. Performance improvement system(s)

- The department uses its Standards of Excellence (*see pg. 13*), including the Program Integrity model, to maintain an organizational focus on performance improvement and to guide a systematic evaluation and improvement of key processes. The Program Integrity model features a defined set of balanced standards to be achieved in the pursuit and attainment of the department's mission. Its components are compliance assurance, quality customer service, productivity and, beginning in FY2011, a separate component for quality. Each of those components has measurable results and can be used to evaluate the agency at levels ranging from specific caseload or work unit up to an agencywide level. The Standards of Excellence drive continuous improvement efforts and strategic planning. Customer feedback is an inherent part of this process. The department also uses state and federally mandated processes to examine and report on its success. The Committee on Rehabilitation Excellence (CORE) is a group of senior leaders charged with analyzing, formulating and assessing action plans and evaluating the agency's key performance measures. CORE communicates at regular intervals with field supervisors through individual interviews, videoconferences and site visits to foster two-way communication.

9. Organizational structure



10. Base Budget Expenditures and Appropriations

Accountability Report Appropriations/Expenditures Chart						
Base Budget Expenditures and Appropriations						
Major Budget Categories	FY 08-09 Actual Expenditures		FY 09-10 Actual Expenditures		FY 10-11 Appropriations Act	
	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds
Personal Service	\$ 51,550,645	\$ 8,175,942	\$ 53,381,512	\$ 8,049,060	\$ 61,051,465	\$ 7,168,665
Other Operating	\$ 31,058,361	\$ 465,523	\$ 30,154,512	\$ 71,870	\$ 36,535,842	\$ 58,479
Special Items						
Permanent Improvements	\$ 5,555,884		\$ 2,556,080			
Case Services	\$ 17,287,855	\$ 29,061	\$ 18,200,523	\$ 3,000	\$ 22,732,488	
Distributions to Subdivisions						
Fringe Benefits	\$ 15,242,096	\$ 2,603,459	\$ 15,691,842	\$ 2,027,372	\$ 16,028,886	\$ 1,712,103
Non-recurring						
Total	\$ 120,694,841	\$ 11,273,985	\$ 119,984,469	\$ 10,151,302	\$ 136,348,681	\$ 8,939,247
Other Expenditures						
		Sources of Funds	FY 08-09 Actual Expenditures	FY 09-10 Actual Expenditures		
		Supplemental Bills				
		Capital Reserve Funds	\$ 1,562,109	\$ 918,409		
		Bonds				

11. Major Program Areas

Major Program Areas																											
Program Number and Title	Major Program Area Purpose (Brief)	FY 08-09 Budget Expenditures		FY 09-10 Budget Expenditures		Key Cross References for Financial Results*																					
		State:	Federal:	State:	Federal:																						
01000000 Administration	General operation and support of all agency programs.	State:	1,063,421.00	State:	1,259,215.00	7.3-1 thru 7.3-9 7.6-2																					
		Federal:	4,045,266.00	Federal:	5,679,791.00																						
		Other:	91,870.00	Other:	151,040.00																						
		Total:	5,200,557.00	Total:	7,090,046.00																						
		% of Total Budget:	4.31%	% of Total Budget:	5.91%																						
05100000 Basic Services	Delivery of services to people with disabilities enabling them to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.	State:	7,538,765.00	State:	6,799,568.00	7.1-1 thru 7.1-9 7.5-1 thru 7.5-3																					
		Federal:	37,625,491.00	Federal:	32,276,667.00																						
		Other:	422,862.00	Other:	2,359,572.00																						
		Total:	45,587,118.00	Total:	41,435,807.00																						
		% of Total Budget:	37.77%	% of Total Budget:	34.53%																						
05250000 Special Projects	Grant programs, extended rehabilitation services, in-service training, Independent Living.	State:	68,340.00	State:	65,147.00	7.3-10 7.4-3 7.2-3																					
		Federal:	2,854,642.00	Federal:	4,404,906.00																						
		Other:	1,622,827.00	Other:	1,214,943.00																						
		Total:	4,545,809.00	Total:	5,684,996.00																						
		% of Total Budget:	3.77%	% of Total Budget:	4.74%																						
05300000 Workshop Production	Program income from work training centers.	State:		State:		7.3-9																					
		Federal:		Federal:																							
		Other:	15,044,238.00	Other:	15,037,592.00																						
		Total:	15,044,238.00	Total:	15,037,592.00																						
		% of Total Budget:	12.46%	% of Total Budget:	12.53%																						
25000000 Disability Determination Services	Adjudicate SS/SSDI claims for the Social Security Administration.	State:		State:		7.1-14																					
		Federal:	27,115,087.00	Federal:	30,570,871.00																						
		Other:	2,404,052.00	Other:	1,917,235.00																						
		Total:	29,519,139.00	Total:	32,488,106.00																						
		% of Total Budget:	24.46%	% of Total Budget:	27.08%																						
Below: List any programs not included above and show the remainder of expenditures by source of funds.																											
95000000 Employer Contributions and 99000000 Capital Projects																											
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Remainder of Expenditures:</th> <th>State:</th> <th>Federal:</th> <th>Other:</th> <th>Total:</th> <th>% of Total Budget:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="2"></td> <td>2,603,459.00</td> <td>15,051,439.00</td> <td>3,143,082.00</td> <td>20,797,980.00</td> <td>17.23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"></td> <td>2,027,372.00</td> <td>12,522,307.00</td> <td>3,698,243.00</td> <td>18,247,922.00</td> <td>15.21%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>							Remainder of Expenditures:		State:	Federal:	Other:	Total:	% of Total Budget:			2,603,459.00	15,051,439.00	3,143,082.00	20,797,980.00	17.23%			2,027,372.00	12,522,307.00	3,698,243.00	18,247,922.00	15.21%
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* Key Cross-References are a link to the Category 7 - Business Results. These References provide a Chart number that is included in the 7th section of this document.

III. Elements of Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria

*** denotes a Best Management Practice**

1. Leadership

The department's continuous improvement efforts require extremely strong leadership. Senior leaders continue to examine and evaluate all practices and procedures throughout the VR program to address the impact of internal and external factors. This is accomplished through constant attention to formal and informal feedback and to the most obvious indicator—successful employment outcomes for our state's citizens with disabilities.

1.1 Senior leadership direction and communication

Under the direct leadership of the commissioner, senior leaders set, deploy and communicate short and long-term direction through a variety of mechanisms. The visions and values of the

agency are put into “real world” terms through the implementation of the **Standards of Excellence,*** which permeate day-to-day operations and are communicated, understood and executed through specific measures. The standards are tied to executive staff employee performance measurement system (EPMS) documents and in turn are tied to area supervisor EPMS documents.

SCVRD Standards of Excellence

- 1. Program Integrity—a balance among quality customer service, productivity, and compliance assurance**
- 2. Integrated Service Delivery—teamwork ,adherence to core duties, and client-centered service delivery**
- 3. Balance in work training centers—job readiness training to many clients with diverse needs; a variety of contract work; and clients leave with suitable employment**
- 4. Professional appearance of staff, buildings and grounds**
- 5. Ongoing, positive relationships with local agency/entity partners**
- 6. Ongoing, positive relationships and education of local elected officials on VR programs and benefits**
- 7. Direct job placement for all clients who require assistance**
- 8. Achievement of successful client employment outcome goals**
- 9. Staff members understand and embrace the Standards and are held accountable**

An executive committee, under the commissioner’s direction, reviews policy and other major department functions regularly. At senior manager meetings, held at least monthly by the commissioner, a larger group of department leaders shares information on agency initiatives, progress, and causes for concern. These meetings allow for leaders with varying responsibilities to problem solve and work together to achieve goals and promote intradepartmental cooperation. Senior managers also coordinate quarterly meetings of supervisors from throughout the state.

The Committee on Rehabilitation Excellence (CORE)* is a group of senior leaders charged with analyzing, formulating and assessing action plans and evaluating the agency’s key performance measures. CORE communicates at regular intervals with field supervisors through personal interviews, conference calls, monthly videoconference meetings, and site visits to foster two-way communication.

There is a four-part process in CORE’s assessment of area operations:

- Area development directors (ADDs) meet with all area supervisors individually to discuss strengths and needs. The agency has established a series of nine Standards of Excellence for area performance, and each supervisor is accountable for area success in meeting these standards. Each supervisor then submits to the area development director an action plan (Steps for Excellence) for addressing their area needs.
- Area supervisors, in conjunction with ADDs, update the Steps for Excellence plan quarterly, noting progress to date and listing additional needs and proposed actions. Area councils help drive improvements. They also receive results from the assistant commissioner for field operations summarizing their achievement relating to Program Integrity and other standards and through their individual performance appraisals.
- ADDs visit offices on a regular basis to coach and mentor the supervisors on techniques to improve office performance and guide area programmatic direction and innovation.

- CORE conducts a formal evaluation of performance results and composite scores at the end of the year and reviews the successes and opportunities for improvement.

Throughout the process, the department's three ADDs work with each office within their respective regions to provide programmatic guidance and act as a liaison to the State Office. Area supervisors communicate the Standards of Excellence to their staffs through specific measures, goals and initiatives. All staff members receive training in the standards as well as a printed guide to the standards. The standards also are the desktop background on all agency computers.

Senior leaders are committed to a code of ethics drawn up and adopted by SCVRD staff members. All employees are provided this code and asked to commit themselves to upholding its tenets.

Ethical standards are established both internally and externally. Senior leaders have developed very specific policies on expected staff behavior and activities. All policies are now available on the agency's computer network and are also covered in training sessions. Federal vocational rehabilitation regulations mandate compliance with ethical standards in the program's operation. The internal **client relations specialist*** and the Client Assistance Program (CAP) in the Office of the Governor act on behalf of any clients who contend that unethical practices occur. The staffing of an internal client relations specialist has helped the department and CAP resolve all client complaints in recent years without progressing to a formal administrative review.

The agency's legal counsel and senior staff are directly involved in responding to any allegations of legal or ethical wrongdoing made by clients or other entities.

1.2 Focus on customers

Senior leaders establish and promote a focus on customers through emphasis on the core mission of enabling eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment, and the accomplishment of that mission while maintaining a balanced scorecard of measurable compliance assurance, customer service, quality and productivity measures. Senior managers examine customer survey and focus group results as a regular component of the management process (*see Sec. 1.1*). All staff members are trained in customer service.

The mission statement is displayed in all offices, on business cards and stationery, and in training environments. The "core duties" of every staff member relate to and impact the agency mission. All training information is geared toward helping staff better understand the mission and strategies to achieve it. The agency's Integrated Service Delivery System is client-centered. Senior managers seek ways to empower staff to provide more timely service delivery for customers through a team approach. The Standards of Excellence emphasize a focus on all key customer groups.

1.3 Impact on public

In the agency's area offices, the local leadership stays in close contact with clients, business and industry partners, employers and referral sources to ensure program effectiveness. As part of the Program Integrity measurement system, formal surveys were developed for each of those groups to pinpoint areas of concern. Counterpart meetings provide excellent feedback on local needs.

The department has numerous built-in mechanisms for ensuring ethical business practices. Vocational rehabilitation law contains very strict compliance measures that are monitored

closely at different levels within the organization and through outside audits. The department's administrative and client service policies outline agency standards for conduct and adherence to the law. SCVRD also employs a full-time staff attorney for guidance in compliance issues and legal interpretations.

The agency's risk management department promotes safety awareness to reduce workplace injuries and illnesses, provide a hazard-free work environment and lower Workers' Compensation premiums. The agency's 24 work training facilities include industrial-type settings for both staff and clients, so high safety standards are imperative. The risk management department processes all Workers' Compensation cases for staff and clients. The department's goal is to show a decrease in the number of Workers' Compensation claims and therefore reduce the annual premiums. (see 7.4-5)

1.4 Maintaining fiscal, legal and regulatory accountability

The commissioner solicits the agency board's support, guidance and approval for any significant initiative or operational change. Policies, procedures, and state and federal regulations also guide the direction of the department. CORE ensures that field operations are held accountable for carrying out policies and procedures consistently statewide. The program evaluation unit measures compliance with client service policy objectively and consistently across all caseloads.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (SCVRD's federal regulatory agency) conducts an annual review to assess compliance with federal regulations.

Fiscal accountability is accomplished by adherence to state and federal laws and measured through annual state and federal audits. Federal audits break down expenditures into significant categories of service provision and administration. The state budget office, state legislature and governor's office also provide oversight as the agency budget is developed for each year.

Federal and state auditors conduct annual financial, procurement and client services audits. They are by nature independent, reporting to external regulatory groups. The department's internal audit unit reports directly to the commissioner.

The Client Assistance Program as well as the internal client relations office ensure protection of clients' interests. Procedures are in place to investigate any issues or grievances that clients may

Program Integrity Model



have with services or the staff providing services. There are also state and federal confidentiality laws outlined in agency policy and monitored by supervisors and the internal legal counsel.

1.5 Key performance measures

Senior leaders use the Steps for Excellence as a focus for achieving the organization's objectives, while area development directors ensure that the Standards of Excellence are consistently addressed statewide. Area and composite scores reflect performance of the standards, which encompass Program Integrity and other measures tied into the agency

mission, vision and values, RSA State Plan and Strategic Plan.

The Program Integrity model* features a defined set of balanced standards to be achieved in the pursuit and attainment of the department's mission. Its components are compliance assurance, quality customer service, productivity and, beginning in FY2011, a separate component for quality. Each of those components has measurable results. The work training centers must maintain an appropriate balance of effective, quality client service while meeting the quality and financial demands of business partnerships.

Another key measure is a set of national standards and indicators, required by the department's enabling federal law, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The seven standards and indicators provide program effectiveness comparisons with VR agencies regionally and nationally.

Senior managers regularly review local and state goals and performance for the number of referrals, number of customers served, number of rehabilitations, customer satisfaction data, income reports from the department's work training centers, costs of services, and other measures.

1.6 Performance review/feedback

Organizational performance and capabilities are reviewed through the Standards of Excellence measures mentioned above. Results of measures are used to establish short-term and long-term goals to improve performance. Senior leaders serve as team leaders for work groups which assess agency effectiveness and identify strategic planning initiatives. Individual and team performance is directly tied to annual performance appraisals, which include areas that need improvement and specific steps for improvement.

Surveys and reviews drive initiatives to meet changing organizational needs. By listening and reviewing feedback from staff and customers, senior leaders make adjustments in training and develop agendas based on needs expressed by staff. Leadership directs its attention to areas of need identified by local office performance and statewide efficiency and effectiveness measures. The team concept that the department has emphasized for several years has built-in mechanisms for effectively responding to concerns generated by team discussions. The team concept applies to the State Office as well as to local area offices.

The commissioner conducts focus groups to gather feedback to be used in continuous improvement efforts. Action plans address issues brought forth in these focus groups. State and federal audits also reflect SCVRD performance and provide a basis for establishing goals.

1.7 Succession planning and leadership development

Senior managers promote and personally participate in the development of future organizational leaders through a formal Professional Development and Leadership Program (PDLP) and through identification of potential leaders and managers through individual performance measures, team performance measures and leadership opportunities made available by staff participation in senior manager-led special projects, initiatives, and best-practice sharing. Senior managers also provide mentoring opportunities.

1.8 Creating an environment of performance improvement

Organizational review findings are translated into priorities for continuous improvement and opportunities for innovation through several means. The Committee on Rehabilitation Excellence (CORE) ensures progress toward the standards for compliance assurance, productivity, quality and customer service. CORE collects and analyzes data, formulates,

receives and assesses plans for corrective action and follows up to ensure implementation. The priorities for improvement arise from the Standards, including Program Integrity index measures. These priorities are communicated through face-to-face discussions with managers and other staff, through written guidelines and policies, EPMS goals, and development of effective training modules.

1.9 Creating an environment for learning

Senior leaders create an environment for organizational and workforce learning through extended learning needs assessments that include getting feedback from employees themselves. Resulting action plans include but are not limited to: face-to-face learning opportunities, webinars, videoconferencing, offsite training, electronic training modules, the Professional Development and Leadership Program, specialized “rehabilitation institutes” tied to skills related to the Standards of Excellence, orientation, coaching and mentoring programs.

1.10 Engagement, motivation and reward/recognition of workforce

Senior leaders engage the workforce through a systematic communications approach. Senior managers stay abreast of ongoing actions through monthly meetings that enable them to interact with each other and to present a consistent message to others inside and outside the organization. Area development directors hold videoconferences and regional meetings with area office supervisors, which allow for frank discussions of issues. In turn, area supervisors meet with their local area councils for two-way communication. Each quarter, area supervisors are brought together for a one- or two-day meeting with senior managers, much of which is devoted to a review of Standards issues. Local area feedback and best practices are shared. The communication cycle is further enhanced by ADD visits to field offices, where feedback is gathered and shared with CORE.

Two-way communication is also achieved through internal customer service surveys. Senior managers and other State Office personnel are rated for their internal customer service with survey results that include open-ended comments about management communication.

The commissioner is also directly involved in workforce feedback through focus groups that she personally conducts with cross sections of staff. These sessions always have follow-up actions, which are communicated in writing and through quarterly supervisor meetings.

The Celebration of Success program provides individual recognition for outstanding customer service, productivity and program excellence and includes awarding of prizes from an agency catalog. The agency board recognizes top office performance and high-achieving staff are recognized by the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Association.

1.11 Strengthening the community

One of the Standards of Excellence requires strong relationships with partners from other agencies and organizations. The commissioner and senior managers meet with other state agency directors and managers to strengthen these interdepartmental relationships, as do area supervisors and other staff at the local level.

Key communities for SCVRD are disability organizations, such as the Head and Spinal Cord Injury Association, Brain Injury Alliance, Epilepsy Foundation, and National Alliance on Mental Illness, among others. Staff members are assigned to maintain relationships with these organizations, attend their meetings, offer support and be involved with their initiatives. In turn, SCVRD invites members of these organizations to provide training on disability-specific topics,

helping VR staff work more effectively with those populations. The department also offers monetary mini-grants and in-kind donations to these associations for conferences and other initiatives they may conduct when employment is a topic.

The agency coordinates community-based activities for Disability Mentoring Day, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Youth Leadership Forum for youths with disabilities, and the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

SCVRD also obtained grants to provide low-interest loans for qualified people with disabilities who need assistive technology assistance or need to purchase equipment to become self-employed. Another grant-funded program provides guidance to people with disabilities who are uncertain how employment will impact their Social Security or other disability benefits.

SCVRD participates in the state's emergency preparedness plan by providing personnel and equipment in the event of a major emergency. Crisis counseling and accessible transportation for people with disabilities are two key areas of contribution.

The agency's leadership firmly supports citizenship activities nationally, statewide and locally. Members of the senior leadership team are involved in civic organizations, disability advocacy organizations, task forces on disability and other community groups that can benefit from their expertise. Agency employees are also quite active in community assistance projects (*See Section 7.6*).

2. Strategic Planning

2.1 Strategic planning process

Strategic planning addresses strengths and weaknesses through a systematic approach to analyzing operations throughout the agency—specifically through the Standards measures.

With the commissioner's leadership and direction, areas identified as opportunities for beneficial new strategic initiatives or areas in need of corrective strategies are assigned to appropriate senior leaders or CORE to develop and deploy plans of action. Performance review data and internal and external customer feedback help determine the need for strategic planning initiatives to address programmatic and fiscal challenges.

This may be carried out through work groups, a statewide committee where a demonstration program may be developed, or at the local level as part of the action plan that each area office is required to develop and use. Planning incorporates new technology to enhance service delivery and addresses the challenges identified by CORE and other management reviews.

The agency strategic plan is structured according to Baldrige criteria categories, and senior staff members monitor strategic objectives and identify potential new initiatives for action. Each category features strategic objectives and established time frames for implementation and review of each phase of the plan. Agency strategic initiatives include representation from diverse perspectives in an effort to identify and eliminate potential blind spots in planning.

SCVRD's strategic planning addresses strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats through consistent and systematic communication with customers; formal customer surveys that are part of Program Integrity; partnership relationships with other agencies and the business community; focus group activities; federally required and regulated initiatives aimed at a high level of

Fig. 2.1

SCVRD Key Strategic Objectives

Program Number and Title	Supported Agency Strategic Planning Goal/Objective	Related FY 09-10 and Beyond Key Agency Action Plan/Initiative(s)	Key Cross Ref. for Performance Measures
All	<p>Standards of Excellence: a set of standards used by SCVRD to maintain an organizational focus on performance and to guide systematic evaluation and improvement of key processes, including the following two subsets:</p>	<p>Performance is tracked for all area offices in each of the Standards; Steps for Excellence developed for each area. <i>Ongoing goal: Consistently high performance in all standards.</i></p>	<p>7.1-1 thru 7.1-9 7.2-1, 7.2-2</p>
	<p>Program Integrity: a balanced set of measurable standards which are essential to the department's success relative to compliance assurance, productivity, customer service and quality.</p>	<p>Compilation of an index of measurable results to evaluate performance at all levels of the organization, for internal/external benchmarking and continuous improvement. Currently expanding the model to include quality as fourth component, with initiatives underway to establish quality practices and measures. <i>Short term goal: each office meets state average. Long-term: every office meets state goal and agency performance to be higher than peers nationally where applicable.</i></p>	<p>7.5-1 7.6-1 7.6-3 7.2-1</p>
	<p>Work Training Center Balance: centers seek to balance financial impact with the need to provide the variety of rehabilitation services of greatest benefit to clients.</p>	<p>Development of performance measures that balance quality job preparedness services and work training with business indicators that financially sustain and equip centers to provide these client-focused services. <i>Short-term goal: each center meets state average. Long-term: every office meets state goal.</i></p>	<p>7.3-8 7.5-1</p>
All	<p>Return on Investment: set of measures that reflect the economic impact of competitive employment of clients through their own gain in financial achievement and through the return on the taxpayer investment.</p>	<p>Service provision that maximizes employment potential of client as well as the agency's resources. Measured through application of a formula that incorporates key economic indicators in projecting long-term benefit of client services. <i>Goal: annual improvement in ROI.</i></p>	<p>7.3-1 thru 7.3-7</p>
All	<p>CORE (Committee on Rehabilitation Excellence)</p>	<p>A process to assure achievement of the Standards of Excellence by collecting and analyzing data, maximizing HR effectiveness, formulating and assessing plans for corrective action, and assuring implementation and follow-up. <i>Goal: annual improvement of Standards performance</i></p>	<p>7.1-1 thru 7.1-9 7.5-1</p>
All	<p>Professional Development and Leadership Program (PDLP) to transfer organizational knowledge and develop future leaders in light of significant retirements.</p>	<p>Formal program that fosters excellence by aligning agency needs with individual career goals. Two levels of competencies, professional development and leadership development, enhance the skills and knowledge of future leaders. Expanded to include DDS staff. <i>Short term: skills attainment. Long-term: leadership position attainment.</i></p>	<p>7.4-1 thru 7.4-4</p>
All	<p>Partnerships to enhance agency outreach and service provision.</p>	<p>Emphasis on partnerships with other agencies to coordinate services, increase successful closures and provide direct job placements; with employers, with business and industry and with former clients to promote the agency. <i>Short term: increase in partnerships. Long-term: increase in co-funded positions and increase in referrals.</i></p>	<p>7.2-2 thru 7.2-5 7.3-10 7.5-3</p>
All	<p>Redirection of Staff Resources to provide the highest level of client service possible.</p>	<p>Centralization of roles and redirection of personnel into roles that promote more direct client service, especially service to clients with significant disabilities. <i>Short term: procurement, accounting, eligibility compliance, assessment compliance. Long-term: Additional compliance and other roles as identified through organizational review.</i></p>	<p>7.6-3 7.5-2</p>

Fig. 2.1 continued**SCVRD Key Strategic Objectives**

Supported Agency Strategic Planning Goal/Objective	Related FY 09-10 and Beyond Key Agency Action Plan/Initiative(s)	Key Cross Ref. for Performance Measures
Transition Services	Statewide initiatives to strengthen partnerships with high schools to provide vocational rehabilitation services to youth in advance of post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), adult education, and other services leading to achievement of vocational objectives. <i>Short term: structure staff resources dedicated to transition services. Long-term: increase total number of students served, school referrals and successful outcomes.</i>	7.5-2 7.3-10 7.2-3
Case Management System (CMS) Enhancement to follow the natural progression of the rehabilitation process and support integrated service delivery system in an intuitive and user-friendly format.	Phases of development: (1) new interface, (2) offline survey, (3) assessment to determine eligibility, (4)vocational assessment, (5)Individualized Plan for Employment; (6) closures (7) centralized compliance. <i>Short-term: phased rollout. Phases 1,2,3 complete. Phase 4 FY2011. Long term: full implementation by FY2013.</i>	7.1-1 thru 7.1-9 7.6-3
Electronic File whereby all evidence material for the disability decision is either submitted electronically or scanned into the file electronically.	Integrate system enhancements into the electronic case processing workflow to include electronic processes of all levels of claims and expanded capabilities for quality assurance management and electronic submission of medical evidence.	7.1-10

employment outcomes for clients; research into alternative funding resources tied to improved services for underserved client groups; state and federal budget implications or other issues stemming from legislative/political environments.

Redirection of resources sometimes results from new initiatives that address program concerns, new mandates, budget cuts, or changes in staffing patterns brought about by role revision and/or population shifts in the geographic areas served.

Planning includes risk management assessments/plans and IT safeguards for all facilities to ensure safety and organizational continuity. Financial, societal and ethical risks are all encompassed in the department's efforts to improve the lives of people with disabilities in a financially accountable, ethical and customer-centered way. The human element of SCVRD's core mission drives decision making that protects client interests and offers the maximum opportunity for them to compete in society's workplace.

The agency has the ability to execute the strategic plan and the agility to adapt when conditions change because of its consistency in reviewing data and results and taking follow-up actions. Objectives are carried out with regularly scheduled reviews and adjustments or corrective actions.

2.2 Addressing strategic challenges

The strategic challenges identified in Section I, Item 4 are addressed directly by the agency's strategic objectives (*Fig.2.1*). They correlate through action plans and the objectives/plans have measurable indicators of their success.

2.3 Developing and tracking action plans

CORE oversees the development of action plans in each of the area offices. These action plans, known as Steps for Excellence, address the Standards of Excellence for area operations. These plans are monitored for compliance and achievement of the targeted goals. In turn, they are used as tools for training and the setting of new goals at the beginning of each year.

The management team helps establish local office goals for successful rehabilitations by taking into account staffing, client bases, referral sources, local demographics and economic conditions, previous accomplishments and other factors. These local goals add up to a statewide goal for successful rehabilitations, and allocation of resources is based on goals.

For action plans at the statewide level, thorough study of the validity and potential effectiveness of the plan precedes deployment. Many major action plans have **demonstration projects*** to test their effectiveness and logistical requirements and to offer opportunity for feedback from staff and customers.

The area development director, assistant commissioner for client services, and budget director conduct quarterly reviews of area expenditures for consistency and efficiency, make recommendations for reallocation of resources when necessary, and provide intervention when an area is not in alignment with expectations.

The Information Technology department works closely with State Office and local client service personnel to provide data and customized upgrades needed to deploy strategic planning initiatives, such as identifying areas that need strengthening or setting appropriate goals.

2.4 Communication and deployment

Communication of strategic objectives, action plans and performance measures generally occur through verbal discussions and presentations complemented by supporting written communication. Quarterly supervisor meetings hosted by the commissioner often provide the setting for communicating objectives, plans and measures. Senior management provides follow-up throughout the year to ensure that communication cascades throughout the organization and that deployment is in place.

During deployment of any major initiative there is ample opportunity for questions or comments from supervisory or other affected staff. Area development directors, part of the senior management team, work with local offices to maintain an open communication link. Local area councils provide an important source of perspectives and suggestions concerning strategic initiatives and service provision. The department's intranet provides topical bulletin board options for all employees to express themselves. Training is developed to enhance staff understanding and "comfort levels" with new objectives or measures. The strategic plan is circulated to staff in all locations and posted on the agency intranet.

2.5 Measuring progress on action plans

The Committee on Rehabilitation Excellence (CORE) is directly linked with program operations and is charged with analyzing, formulating and assessing action plans and evaluating the agency's key performance measures.

The Standards of Excellence have key performance measures and area scorecards for tracking progress on action plans, including the Program Integrity measures. Quarterly reports allow for progress updates and projections. All area offices operate from the same set of measures, so there is alignment throughout the organization in Program Integrity.

Support processes by nature have different measures, but those measures are still aligned by the Program Integrity categories of compliance assurance, quality, customer service and productivity.

Other key measures for the department involve comparative data on cost per rehabilitation and clients served, number of persons rehabilitated per 100,000 population, and the rate of return on the taxpayer investment that successfully rehabilitated clients provide by becoming taxpayers themselves.

2.6 Evaluating and improving strategic planning process

CORE reviews plans and makes recommendations through consultation with the commissioner, other senior staff and work groups.

2.7 Strategic plan availability

The agency's strategic plan is available to the public by e-mailing info@scvrd.state.sc.us. A link to the agency's State Plan submitted to RSA is available on the agency site, www.scvrd.net.

3. Customer Focus

3.1 Key customers and requirements

The department determines its customers and customer requirements through a combination of listening/learning methods, both formal and informal. As required by the Rehab Act of 1973, SCVRD must conduct a comprehensive, statewide assessment every three years describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the needs of:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
- Individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce investment system.

This is accomplished by assessing and analyzing statistical trends and with input from constituency groups. The assessment was conducted this year and used a variety of strategies and data sources, including analysis of Social Security Administration data; U.S. Census Bureau population data; RSA 911 national comparative data; SCVRD 911 client data; survey data and an analysis of the findings of counterpart meetings conducted each quarter with agency partners.

All individuals with impairments who intend to achieve an employment outcome are potential primary customers of SCVRD. They can be referred from any source in their communities.

Client requirements are determined based on individual needs regarding services and employment goals. At every major stage in the rehabilitation process, the client is at the center of the planning process. Identification of the requirements for a client's successful rehabilitation results from a combination of professional assessment and client input.

Other customers include anyone who interacts with SCVRD, including business partners, other state agencies, vendors, taxpayers and legislators and referral sources. Their key requirements are determined by the nature of their relationship with the agency.

3.2 Keeping current with changing needs

The commissioner meets with the leaders of key agencies. The SCVRD state office also has staff specializing in business and industry relations and has a growing Business Partnership Network. Business partners provide feedback about their needs in today's marketplace, about contract services SCVRD performs for them, and about the clients they hire. Local work training center advisory board members provide ideas, feedback and advice on meeting the needs of their communities.

The department has established a network of successfully rehabilitated former clients who offer assistance in continuous improvement efforts. Agency leaders at the state and local levels stay in touch with members of the General Assembly and Congressional delegation to answer questions and provide information.

Counterpart meetings*bring SCVRD together with local agencies and entities to assess challenges, adequacy of service provision, and ways to collaborate. This year, SCVRD local area office staff met with their counterparts at SCPPP, SCDC, DOADAS, and SCDHEC-Public Health Clinics.

3.3 Customer access mechanisms

Personal relationships form the centerpiece for all customer access mechanisms, while other resources serve as support of those relationships. For clients already in the program, strong relationships with their VR counselors and other staff are vital to keep their employment goals and services on track. Regular contact to coordinate appointments and service delivery and keeping the client informed are required and critical to giving the client the access he or she needs to seek information or make complaints. Prospective clients are frequently referred by third parties to call or visit their local SCVRD offices for information, or those referral sources will initiate the calls and make appointments on behalf of those customers. Referring agencies maintain access through contact persons assigned by SCVRD for that purpose.

SCVRD's website targets all major customer groups, each with their own section. Site visitors can contact the department or file complaints through an e-mail link or by using a directory of local office information.

Employers and business partners at the local level access information through their relationships with counselors, work training center staff, business development specialists, and other contacts, which are required to nurture these relationships. The BPN provides access to SCVRD for business and industry. Most training centers have advisory boards that provide feedback, support, and contract opportunities.

The department systematically follows up on client complaints beginning at the local office level. If the concerns can't be resolved there, SCVRD's client relations specialist addresses the issue. The client also has the option, at any time, to take a matter to the Client Assistance Program in the Governor's Office. Disputes are solved in an orderly and rational way through this system.

3.4 Measuring satisfaction

Through the department's Program Integrity measurement system, the client customer service satisfaction rate is calculated quarterly at the area and state levels. Comparisons are made among organizational units and with previous years' performance. Quarterly statewide customer service surveys are conducted focusing on a specific customer population (impairment, service, referral source, employer, etc.). The survey results, compiled and issued to CORE, then distributed to area supervisors, become the subject of policy/procedure revision, staff training, consultation, management action or other continuous improvement application.

CORE and the department's legal department review complaints received through the client relations office on a quarterly basis to formulate recommendations on policy/procedure revision, staff training or other action.

Each year the department conducts follow-up studies based on surveys of a random sample of successfully rehabilitated clients. This survey monitors satisfaction levels and rates of job retention. Surveys include clients who were not successfully rehabilitated to learn why they have not reached an employment outcome and to determine if dissatisfaction played a part.

The department has a **"mystery shopper" program*** in which callers posing as potential clients or other customers call VR offices inquiring about services. The callers score the offices on telephone customer service issues and helpfulness.

Satisfaction from employers is measured in the success level of clients placed into employment, in the amount of outsource work contracted to SCVRD training centers, or through customer service surveys and focus groups.

3.5 Using feedback information

It is required that the client is offered the opportunity for formal input at various stages of the rehabilitation process. Attention to changing client needs is vital. SCVRD's vocational assessment and career exploration specialists' services reflect that approach. To determine the most appropriate vocational objective, and in keeping with the client's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice, a variety of assessment tools are used. Often, community-based evaluations are the appropriate tool. A client with a particular job interest can try out that job in an actual work setting, "shadow" a person in the community who actually performs a certain job, or work under a mentor.

Referral sources are contacted on a frequent basis to assure continuation of collaborative relationships. Cooperative agreements are developed to assure mutually beneficial partnerships. Liaisons are assigned to specific service providers and to disability-based private non-profit organizations. Members of the Business Partnership Network are consulted as to their needs for hiring or outsourcing work.

Focus groups are conducted to determine specific target area needs and to understand the nuances of particular audience needs. Individuals living with impairments, collaborating agencies, and private non-profit organizations are often included in staff development and training activities.

3.6 Building positive relationships

The department's focus on "informed choice" is the cornerstone for successfully building positive relationships with its clients, who are its primary customers. At every stage of the rehabilitation process, the client is involved in planning and signs off on his or her Individualized

Plan for Employment (IPE). Staff promotes client choice in the selection of vocational objectives, services and service providers. The client must be satisfied with services and the vocational rehabilitation outcome before the department claims a successful rehabilitation.

An innovative example of client-centered services is the **Skilled Workforce Apprenticeship Training (SWAT) program,*** geared to provide clients with opportunities for skilled positions with good pay and benefits through apprenticeships with partnering businesses and industries which lead to permanent employment.

The department also builds positive relationships through cooperative agreements with other state and local agencies through community outreach to solicit business and industry involvement with the program as employers, contractors, or advisors; cultivation of ongoing relationships with successfully rehabilitated clients who are now firmly established in their communities and offer a great source of feedback and advocacy; contact with community organizations and legislators; and with marketing tools (print, web, video).

SCVRD enhances the services of other agencies by providing their clients who have disabilities with the quality rehabilitation services they need to gain independence through employment. There are hundreds of cooperative agreements with other organizations. These relationships are strengthened by SCVRD's attention to providing prompt and thorough feedback to its referral sources as to progress and outcomes for clients they refer.

4. Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management

4.1 Determination of measures

The department uses many performance measures, all tied into the accomplishment of the most important performance measure of all—its mission to enable eligible South Carolinians with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and maintain competitive employment.

Information to analyze the department's success comes from a variety of internal and external sources. Each component of the service delivery system and support systems has performance measures that factor into the "big picture" of agency mission accomplishment. Through analysis of the department's enabling legislation as well as other federal and state guidelines and through feedback from internal and external customers, the agency's leadership has developed key performance measures, incorporated into the Standards of Excellence, including Program Integrity.

National standards and indicators are used to compare SCVRD with other state VR programs at the national and regional levels. These indicators are designed to illustrate the overall effectiveness of VR programs and RSA requires achievement of standard levels.

Internal benchmarking incorporates the elements of Program Integrity and the other eight Standards of Excellence. Procedures, instruments and empirical methods have been developed to review caseloads, collect customer satisfaction information and expand the means of tracking and quantifying the Program Integrity components.

State Office Program Integrity criteria reflect area results and its impact on field offices and other departments in achieving agency missions. This provides a direct link for operational divisions of the department, such as human resources, finance, information technology, and others.

4.2 Using data/information in decision making

Caseload information is available and accessed through the network to track daily operations and performance. Real-time caseload information is accessible in all offices. In addition, this data is reviewed and broken down into categories of performance and goals to identify areas of strength and weakness. Area councils and area supervisors analyze the information to develop the Steps for Excellence. CORE meets on a regular basis to coordinate the review and access the information gathered and to serve as a mechanism for feedback, decision-making and updating of information for the strategic planning process. Area results can be calculated by area and the state, so that data collected can be used to foster improvement at any of those levels.

The department uses reports to spot trends, project future needs and address federal key indicators. For example, Program Integrity measures reveal productivity, compliance assurance, quality and customer service gaps that are used in decision making processes. Customer satisfaction surveys are carefully evaluated and used in the consideration of improvements or new services. Training center services and revenue data are used to ensure the balance required by the agency's strategic objectives.

The Social Security Disability Determination Services maintains an extensive array of daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports through comprehensive division, agency and Social Security computer reporting systems. Statistical reports are aimed at providing performance tracking information related to established goals and objectives. Data allows comparisons at the individual, unit, office, state, and national levels in areas such as productivity, processing time, documentation and decision quality, cost effectiveness and staff attrition.

4.3 Key measures

Standards of Excellence results are used to drive continuous improvement at the local and state level. Program Integrity measures and national standards and indicators are extremely important performance indicators. All measures related to the successful employment of people with disabilities are key measures, including number of people rehabilitated, referrals, direct job placements and cost effectiveness. **Return on investment calculations*** are based on a set of measures that reflect the economic impact of competitive employment on clients through their own gain in financial achievement and through the return on the taxpayer investment.

Disability Determination Services key measures include productivity, processing time, documentation and decision quality, and cost effectiveness.

All key measures are reviewed through CORE in alignment with business needs established through regulatory and customer feedback/results.

4.4 Comparative data use

Selection and use of comparative data begins with national standards and indicators, which reveal how the department ranks in federally mandated measures. These figures are used by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the department's regulatory agency, to assess effectiveness of state VR programs. The department, in turn, uses them as a basis to consider improvements to service delivery when necessary.

The Program Integrity Index is an internal comparative data mechanism that enables the leadership to compare key performance measures at all levels of the service delivery system and foster continuous improvement. The Standards of Excellence measures provide comparisons of organizational units, which factor into decision making.

Efficiency and effectiveness comparative data enables the agency to monitor and address trends in national, regional and internal benchmarking.

4.5 Data integrity, reliability, timeliness, accuracy, security, availability

Real time on-demand reports are available for the majority of the reporting needs of the agency. These reports are accessed through the application menu system based on the user's access level and menu assignment. Some of the reporting is automated and sends email reminders and reports to the individual users.

Built-in edits in applications check for accuracy and flag questionable entries prior to commitment to the database. An automated user ID/menu assignment system was created to ensure that new employees and existing employee changes in computer access are completed accurately and on time.

Network servers are backed up nightly to encrypted tape. The operating system is backed up weekly and the off-site storage of data and the operating system is carried out weekly. Confidentiality is crucial to the agency in light of its very strict regulations on client information. All hard drives on the servers and networked computers are encrypted to safeguard client information from unauthorized access. A strong firewall and virus protection system has been very successful in minimizing virus attacks on the network. Remote access to the network is limited to an encrypted VPN connection.

Accuracy of federal case service compliance data is enhanced by a built-in edit program that notifies users of errors and anomalies so corrections can be made prior to submission.

Performance audits verify the accuracy and integrity of files. Obsolete computer hard drives are erased and formatted to ensure that no confidential data remains on the device.

4.6. Translating performance review findings into continuous improvement priorities

The Committee on Rehabilitation Excellence (CORE) collects and analyzes data, formulates, receives and assesses plans for corrective action and follows up to ensure implementation. The priorities for improvement arise from the Standards of Excellence, including Program Integrity index measures. These priorities are communicated through face-to-face discussions with managers and other staff; written guidelines and policies; EPMS links to program performance standards; development of effective training modules; and strategic planning cycles.

4.7 Organizational and workforce knowledge/best practices

Succession planning is a key management tool for collecting and transferring organizational knowledge. The Professional Development and Leadership Program (PDLP) facilitates this process by exposing candidates to a well-rounded study of the entire organization and a more focused study on their areas of greatest interest. Organizational veterans provide the knowledge base for this instruction.

Coaching and mentoring is provided to all new supervisors. Senior managers who are nearing retirement also provide a great deal of informal transfer of knowledge to their associates. Online training is available for many applications, including the electronic **Case Management System (CMS)***, which follows the natural progression of the rehabilitation process and support integrated service system in an intuitive and user-friendly format. Camtasia is software used to create online training for agency-developed computer programs and is deployed prior to each new CMS module rollout.

Policies are on the network along with personnel, procurement, inventory and other resources. Agency policies are large documents, but user-friendliness is enhanced by a search feature that takes the user straight to the topic of choice.

Best practices are routinely shared at all levels of training and supervisory meetings. CORE's members are at various stages of their careers, and knowledge is transferred within that group. Relevant knowledge is transferred to customers (clients, agency partners, business partners) through CMS required steps, formal and informal meetings, strategies developed through staff training, marketing resources, Business Partnership Network agendas, and other practices tied into achievement of the Standards. Knowledge gained from customers is in the form of formal and informal feedback, including customer service survey results/comments that are shared throughout the agency and help drive strategic planning initiatives.

5. Workforce Focus

5.1 Organization and measurement of work

The agency mission drives the development of work systems and processes. SCVRD's authorizing legislation mandates consistency of services for all clients, and the department's work system structure is designed to monitor and ensure that consistency. The current organizational structure and service delivery system is the result of assessment, demonstration projects, analysis and planned change.

Feedback is solicited from internal and external customers to assist the department in the design of work systems and processes. Feedback comes from focus groups, surveys, and individual suggestions from employees, clients, employers and vendors.

In area offices, team members have specialized roles and cross training is used to ensure the continuity of services. Team meetings allow staff input from members of various disciplines as the team partners with the client and assists him/her in developing and following a plan designed to help the client achieve competitive employment.

Organizational units, teams, and individuals are empowered to meet the mission of the agency and its accompanying strategic objectives using the Program Integrity model and its philosophy to "train, trust and verify." Accordingly, they are assessed on the Standards of Excellence.

5.2 Effective communication/knowledge sharing

Team members have specialized roles and cross training is used to ensure the continuity of services. Team meetings allow staff input from members of various disciplines (counselors, vocational assessment and career exploration specialists, job coaches, administrative team support specialists, job preparedness instruction staff, and others) as the team partners with the client. They help the client to develop and follow an individualized plan to achieve competitive employment. In addition, area councils, made up of front-line staff, provide feedback to area supervisors and CORE on programmatic issues.

Innovation is fostered through encouragement of staff feedback on ways to improve systems. An example is the demonstration project process, in which workgroups that include direct service providers contribute expertise as new approaches are developed and tested. This has been crucial in development of the electronic case management system.

The commissioner meets almost daily with members of the executive staff and the senior management team to share information, discuss performance, and plan for process improvement.

CORE allows key senior managers to share and analyze information, discuss and implement strategies, provide direction to and mentor field supervisors, and assess programmatic results. CORE ensures the consistent implementation and assessment of the Standards of Excellence and provides guidance in day-to-day programmatic operations, through regional meetings by videoconference or in person and visits to individual offices. Quarterly supervisor meetings engage local supervisors with senior managers. The commissioner also visits local sites for front-line feedback.

5.3 Recruiting, hiring, placing and retaining employees

The Integrated Service Delivery System (ISDS) team concept led to the development of the various positions (team roles) currently in use. Core job duties were developed for team roles and became the basis for the position description for each role. In interviews, applicants are assessed considering their projected ability to successfully perform these core duties in the team environment. In addition, selected qualified applicants are given trait/characteristics tests. The test is based on the five-factor model of personality and the applicant's results are compared to composite test scores for high performers in the various position types to help judge suitability for the job.

Employees are recruited using web-based job postings, networking, local advertising, and a college recruiting campaign. The department utilizes individual and team interviews, testing, internships, and reference checks to determine suitability for employment. Salary offers are coordinated by the State Office with input from the local supervisor. Every attempt is made to provide consideration for the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities in developing the salary offer.

The department seeks to retain employees by providing a safe, healthy, high-performance work environment that sets high individual and organizational standards.

5.4 Assessing workforce capability and capacity needs

SCVRD's workforce capacity is a balance between the agency's commitment to use taxpayer dollars wisely and the needs of various internal and external customers. While ensuring that clients receive excellent customer service, the agency constantly seeks ways to centralize administrative functions, reallocate positions from support positions to direct client service delivery, simplify processes and cut costs, all with due consideration for the needs of staff. Workforce capability is assessed by constant monitoring of the agency's performance measures and by seeking input from a variety of internal and external customers to determine whether services are meeting or exceeding customers' expectations.

5.5 Support of high performance

The department's Employee Performance Management System process supports two-way communication between the supervisor and employee. It is designed to be a cyclical process beginning with clear communication of job duties (from position description), success criteria, and performance characteristics. It continues with on-going performance communication, and culminates in an evaluation of the employee's progress towards the achievement of the goals documented at the beginning of the cycle.

Core job duties have been developed for most position types within the agency and are consistent statewide. The EPMS allows for supervisors to add additional job duties to the core duties in order to meet local needs. The core job duties were designed around the work team roles required in the field offices. The success criteria developed for use with the EPMS are the measurable and or observable results which should be achieved to indicate successful

performance. Many success criteria relate directly to Standards measures. In addition, successful results, as documented on employees' EPMS evaluations, are directly linked to upward reclassification actions and associated salary increases.

5.6 Development and learning system for leaders

All new area supervisors receive supervisory training through the state Office of Human Resources and internal supervisor training.

In the PDLP curriculum each participant in the professional development and leadership levels of the program has his or her own development plan.

Organizational knowledge is developed in senior and executive staff meetings, quarterly supervisor trainings, mentoring, coaching, on-site trainings, focus groups, PDLP, training modules, job shadowing, and at state and national conferences that provide learning opportunities directly related to the job.

Ethical practices are emphasized through quarterly supervisor meetings, and OHR supervisory training. An online ethics program was implemented this year. Topical reviews are teaching tools for supervisors to recognize ethical issues in service or business. All staff members are asked to sign the agency's code of ethics.

Leadership attributes in each of the Standards are developed through supervisory meetings and best-practices sharing. The Steps for Excellence provide structure for the accomplishment of action plans for area supervisors with guidance from area development directors. Supervisory training/meetings, CORE-identified training, and the PDLP all contribute to development of core competencies.

5.7 Key developmental and training needs identification

A formal needs assessment is conducted for training. Training needs and the subsequent effectiveness of training are identified through management reviews (CORE), program reviews, customer service surveys, EPMS documents, training requests, staff input, and basic job competency requirements. From this information, development plans and training sessions can be established to enhance the employees' ability to support the agency's mission. Training needs are also established through external means such as federal regulations.

5.8 Encouraging on-the-job use of knowledge/skills

The department promotes on-the-job use of knowledge and skills through PDLP projects, through opportunities for staff to use their expertise by helping to develop training modules, and by seeking out opportunities to match employees who have personal experience or specialized knowledge in specific disability areas with positions that maximize their knowledge.

5.9 Employee training linkage to action plans

CORE's involvement in reviews of training needs and effectiveness ensures that training is aligned with action plans. Area client services managers are responsible for training all new staff in client services policies and procedures and providing in-service training to correct deficiencies identified by area results and reviews.

LOTIS (Learner Online Training and Information Site)* is the department's web-based site offering online staff training modules about specific disabilities, safety, ethics, employee orientation and other topics of importance to job performance.

5.10 Evaluating effectiveness of workforce/leader training

The effectiveness of education and training is evaluated through formal evaluations immediately following each training session; program reviews, customer service surveys and EPMS documents. CORE may also make training recommendations based on information it gathers concerning impact on performance, especially as related to the Standards.

5.11 Motivating the workforce

The agency seeks to create an environment where employees understand how their positions support the agency mission and feel valued for their efforts. Career ladders have been established and continue to be refined for most major job categories to encourage employees in their development. The agency has developed matrices to help employees understand how promotions may occur and provide supervisors with a guide to employee development.

The PDLP provides staff with opportunities to expand their career prospects, broaden their knowledge and understanding of the agency, and develop professional and leadership skills that will serve them well in any job within the agency.

State regulations and policies govern employee compensation and benefits. While benefits are standardized across state agencies, the department exercises flexibility allowed by the regulations to provide pay increases for promotions, reclassifications, good performance, and additional knowledge and duties as well as bonuses. Such salary increases are tied directly to the accomplishment of the department's mission and are approved only after the employee satisfies the published criteria for the attainment of each increase.

The department's "flex time" policy allows most employees to adjust their work schedules to accommodate outside commitments and to provide better internal and external customer service.

The "Celebration of Success" program is an innovative reward and recognition system that allows employees to recognize their peers for significant accomplishments. The Disability Determination Services' PRIDE (People Responsibly Influencing Decisional Excellence) awards recognize superior job performance and provide awards for creative achievement, humanitarian service and special acts of service.

5.12 Assessment of workforce well-being and satisfaction

Results of job satisfaction surveys pinpoint areas or position types where employee satisfaction is low and these areas and/or positions are targeted for follow-up. Focus groups are created as a result of position types where well-being survey results indicate a low level of job satisfaction. High turnover or low well-being survey results in a specific location are used as indicators that additional attention needs to be directed at an office to see if there are problems with the work environment and what steps can be taken for improvement.

5.13 Managing career progression and succession planning

Career ladders and matrices help employees understand how promotions may occur and provide supervisors with a guide to employee development. These matrices are factored into planning for employee learning opportunities and in addressing EPMS objectives and career goals. The matrices are posted on the intranet. In addition, as a first option, the department is committed to promotion from within for leadership positions and ensures that vacant positions are posted throughout the agency to encourage interest from employees.

Succession planning and career progression are addressed through the **Professional Development and Leadership Program (PDLP)*** which was spawned from the concerns raised by a large number of expected retirements, especially in management positions, beginning in

2006. The PDLP has surpassed that original intent by creating an environment that fosters excellence by aligning agency needs with individual career goals. Participants design and complete relevant projects for the agency based on demonstrated needs. Employees are also encouraged and in some cases assisted financially to continue their education.

Management acquires and reviews annual lists of employees eligible for retirement or those nearing completion of the Teacher and Employee Retirement Incentive (TERI) to ensure the agency is planning accordingly.

5.14 Maintaining a safe, secure, healthy work environment

The department's **safety program*** has grown steadily in its scope and effectiveness and has been recognized in a National Safety Council publication. Safety assessments are conducted on each facility by State Office personnel every year. Safety concerns are documented after each safety assessment and a report is sent to the supervisor, who has 30 days to address and correct each concern.

New employees receive safety training at orientation, and new center managers and area supervisors receive safety training. Each work training center has a safety coordinator, whose job description requires that 40% of his or her duties are related to safety. Their training includes OSHA 10-hour certification in addition to semi-annual training on local issues. In addition, the National Safety Council offers annual training in selected topics under the Susan B. Harwood grants.

Safety committees meet quarterly in every facility. They implement the safety program with a goal of providing a safe work environment; enhancing safety awareness among employees; identifying hazards and suggesting actions to eliminate them; identifying employee and client trainee safety training needs; and developing and implementing accident investigation procedures.

Each facility is required to prepare and follow safety plans that include: general safety plan; blood-borne pathogens exposure control plan; hazard assessment plan; lock-out/tag-out plan; emergency action plan (tornado, fire, bomb threat); and hazard communication plan.

Regularly scheduled training includes: fire suppression for all staff annually; blood-borne pathogens annually for all at-risk staff; CPR training annually for all first-aid responders; first-aid every three years for all first-aid responders; annual emergency alarm training for all staff; forklift training every three years or after an accident or near miss for all operators; and driver safety training within 90 days of employment for all staff whose primary task is driving.

Building entrances and lobbies have been renovated to permit controlled entry to enhance employee and client safety. Additionally, employees are now able to summon emergency assistance by using networked computers to send a call for help.

Accident reports and trends are used to make recommendations for engineering controls, training, or personal protective equipment to prevent similar accidents from recurring.

6.0 Process Management

6.1 Core Competencies

SCVRD's mission and core competencies grow from its legal mandates of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended—to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive

employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society.

Competencies are determined by customer needs. For clients in the rehabilitation process, current market and economic trends combine with client input to give a picture of competencies needed by staff. Since the agency must have willing employers and other business partners to bring client services to fruition, an ongoing assessment of business community needs is vital. The RSA state plan and agency strategic plan also determine competencies.

Staff must stay up to date on medical improvement knowledge (i.e., speech and hearing devices, assistive technology, insulin pumps, new treatments and surgical advancements) to provide the best guidance and services. Use of technological accelerators such as the CMS and wireless devices require employee competence.

The Standards of Excellence are the framework for competencies. Core competencies include:

- marketing to referral sources and employment/business partners
- counseling skills
- expertise in medical terminology and knowledge of a wide range of disabilities
- ability to understand and synthesize disability-related information to determine eligibility and impact on employability
- career planning assessments to determine vocational objectives and service needs
- knowledge of local employment markets and availability of jobs
- comprehensive evaluations of physical disabilities to include physical therapy and occupational therapy
- case development, management and coordination of services both internally and externally (with partner agencies that are providing treatment)
- rehabilitation engineering to include knowledge of technological advancements available for persons with disabilities
- job readiness services such as those provided in work training centers, which are unique to SCVRD in their structure and impact
- job preparation skills such as completing applications and interviewing skills
- job search and direct job placement into competitive employment based on clients' strengths and abilities and employer needs

Although the agency doesn't have direct competition within state government, its services are more comprehensive and specialized than any single private rehabilitation entity, and its breadth of services is greater than other states' VR agencies, which typically purchase many of the services that SCVRD provides internally.

6.2 Key work processes

Work processes all tie into the mission and contribute to Standards of Excellence achievement and to ensuring statewide consistency of service delivery. The electronic case management system provides a means for direct service delivery staff to plan, deliver, and document services in a logical, intuitive, user-friendly manner which follows the natural progression of a case.

Processes are based on a team concept involving both local and statewide resources and include:

- Completion of the application process in a timely, customer-oriented manner
- Determination of eligibility and services based on customer needs and federal mandates
- Coordination of service delivery based on an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

- Case documentation to ensure information sharing and coordinated service delivery
- Marketing to employers for client placement into competitive employment and for outsource partnerships
- Education of partners and taxpayers/legislators
- Administrative support services from the State Office, such as centralized procurement functions and psychological services; facilities management; human resources management and training; and information technology are managed via electronic systems which include tracking capabilities to ensure timely, consistent, and appropriate services as well as the ability to identify trends.
- Continuous implementation of demonstration projects to identify innovative approaches to improving service delivery.

Every service is oriented toward work or addressing disabilities. Compliance teams have also been established and each service is monitored and measured for quality and effectiveness in enabling clients to gain competitive employment.

6.3 Incorporation of efficiency and effectiveness measures into processes

Processes are designed to meet the requirements of federal regulations and individualized client needs. Those regulations and associated policies are reviewed regularly and the work flow is assessed to determine effectiveness of the process in meeting the needs of the department's primary customers. CORE uses Standards of Excellence data as well as internal and external customer feedback to provide recommendations for changes to the work processes. These recommendations are the basis for demonstration projects and are used to identify best practices before statewide implementation. Advances in technology are continuously monitored to determine more efficient processes. The electronic case file has made **centralized compliance*** a reality. A core group of highly trained reviewers use a system of identifying technical, procedural, and substantial errors which has led to statewide consistency concerning eligibility decisions which are the foundation of the rehabilitation process. This is a real-time process so that corrections are made during the course of the rehabilitation process rather than being discovered in reviews after the process. An accuracy rate allows field staff to identify training needs and provides a mechanism to assess improvement. A new initiative has centralized fiscal compliance for client services purchases.

6.4 Daily operation/meeting key performance requirements

The department uses its Standards of Excellence, including the Program Integrity model, to maintain an organizational focus on performance improvement and to guide a systematic evaluation and improvement of work processes. The Program Integrity model features a defined set of balanced standards to be achieved in the pursuit and attainment of the department's mission. Each of those components has measurable results and can be used to evaluate the agency at levels ranging from specific caseload or work unit up to an agency wide level. Client-centered staffings and compliance committees are charged with ensuring that customer needs are met and that cases proceed in accordance with compliance standards. Real-time caseload activity reports and features built into the case management system also are utilized to monitor the effectiveness of work processes. The Program Integrity results drive continuous improvement efforts and strategic planning. Feedback from all key customer groups is an inherent part of this process. The department also uses state and federally mandated processes to examine and report on its success. CORE is charged with analyzing, formulating and assessing action plans and evaluating the agency's key performance measures. CORE communicates at regular intervals

with field supervisors through personal interviews, conference calls and site visits to foster two-way communication.

In addition to the Standards of Excellence, key results include a review of cycle time including time in status, frequency and quality of client contact and of financial measures such as rate of return on taxpayer investment and cost per served and rehabilitated.

6.5 Evaluation and improvement of processes

The department's Program Integrity measures are ingrained in daily operations, both at the direct client service level and administrative/support levels. CORE coordinates reviews of all aspects of daily operations and makes recommendations for action plans to address opportunities for improvement and to ensure statewide consistency in the department's processes.

Regular sharing of lessons learned occurs through quarterly supervisor meetings with senior managers, which include time designated for best practices sharing; other supervisor meetings held on their own to share Standards of Excellence strategies; monthly area development meetings; and area councils/advisory boards. Each executive staff member is responsible for monitoring and facilitating improved performance in one or two of the standards.

6.6 Key support processes

Critical agency work processes are outlined in detail through role definitions and charts showing the flow of the rehabilitation process. Employees understand their roles in the process through formal training and team building on the job.

Personnel such as area supervisors, administrative team support specialists, and area client services managers provide administrative support in SCVRD area offices.

Some of the key State Office and other support processes include:

Administrative Services	Information Technology
Area Development	Internal Audits
Area Operations	Inventory and Supply Services
Buildings and Grounds	Office of the Commissioner
Client Services	Planning/DDS Development
Center for Comprehensive Services	Procurement Services
Community and Client Relations	Professional Development
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services & Special Populations	Program Development
Facility Management	Public Information
Finance	Quality Assurance
Grants and Funds	Safety and Risk Management
Human Resources	Staff Attorney
Human Resources Development & Training	Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities (2)
	Training Center Services

These support components are improved and updated in response to internal and external Program Integrity surveys and focus groups or through technological upgrades; through development of mission-focused training modules; and through the Employee Performance Management System process.

6.7 Determination of needed resources

Resource usage is governed by fiscal and programmatic regulations of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education. RSA monitors the appropriateness of expenditures and utilizes an audit system to break down expenditures into significant categories of service provision and administration. Within that framework the agency leadership sets priorities in using its available resources as outlined earlier in the Leadership, Strategic Planning and Customer Focus sections.

7. Results

7.1 Mission Accomplishment/Product and Service Outcomes

Fig. 7.1-1

SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES

A key performance effectiveness result is the number of successful closures SCVRD produces. This is the measurement of the number of people with disabilities that have successful employment outcomes after receiving SCVRD services. This is the performance measure that is most directly tied into the mission of the agency. In FY2010 the number of successful rehabilitations decreased as high unemployment rates impacted job placement efforts and the agency felt the long-term effects of state budget reductions.

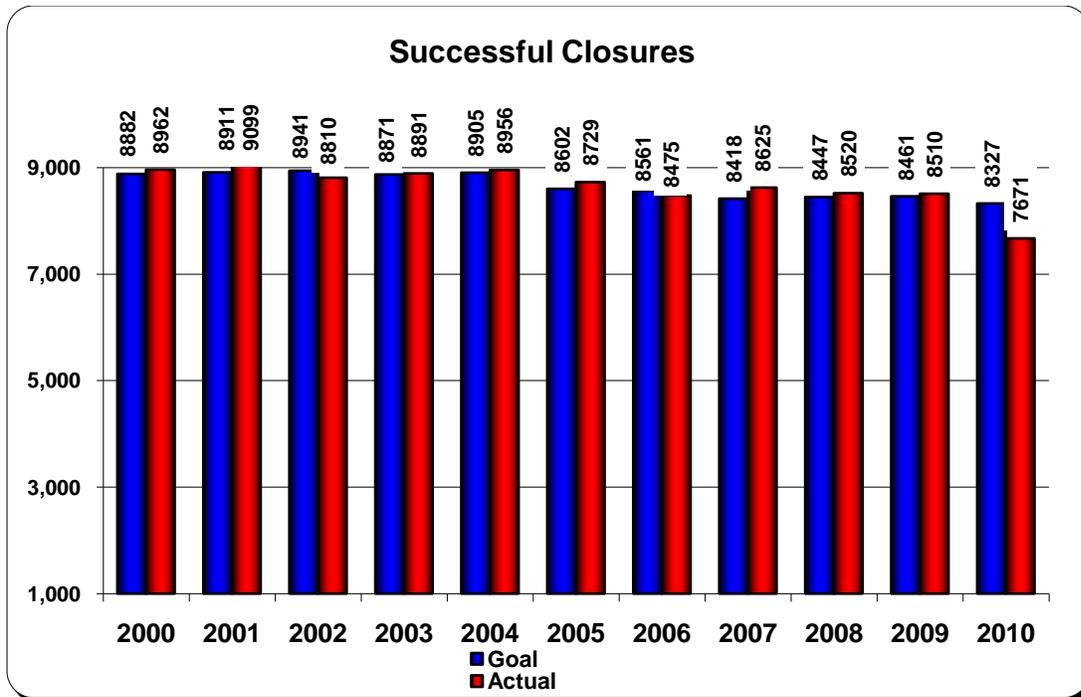
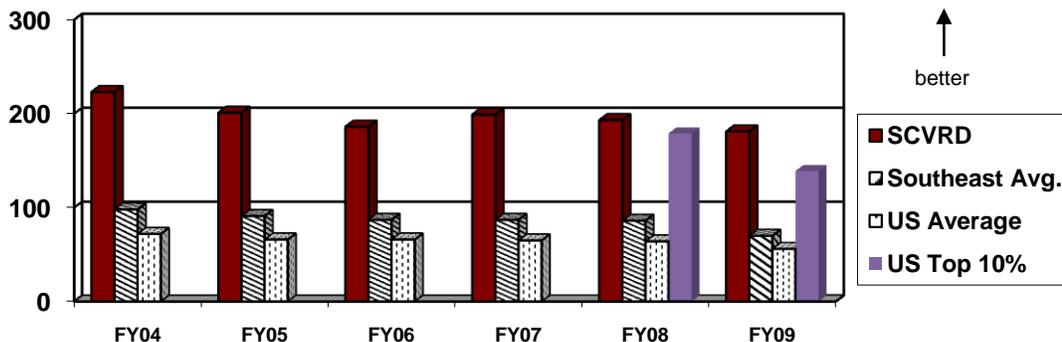


Fig. 7.1-2

REHABILITATIONS PER 100,000 POPULATION

For many years SCVRD has consistently ranked at or near the top among the nation’s public vocational rehabilitation programs in the number of people rehabilitated per 100,000 population. The latest national figures from federal FY2009 show SCVRD at **181** people rehabilitated per 100,000, second only to Vermont, which had **238**. SCVRD was first in the Southeast region; Mississippi was second at **154**. The Southeast average was **70**, the national average was **56** and the states comprising the top 10% in performance averaged **139**. The number of rehabilitations nationally and regionally fell significantly during this period as a result of economic conditions.



NATIONAL STANDARDS AND INDICATORS established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education, for **federal FY2008**. These are primary indicators of performance for state vocational rehabilitation programs.

Fig. 7.1-3

Change in number of closures from previous year—standard is to increase closures by at least one from previous year. Only 10 states saw an increase in FY09. SCVRD’s decrease was less than the national average.

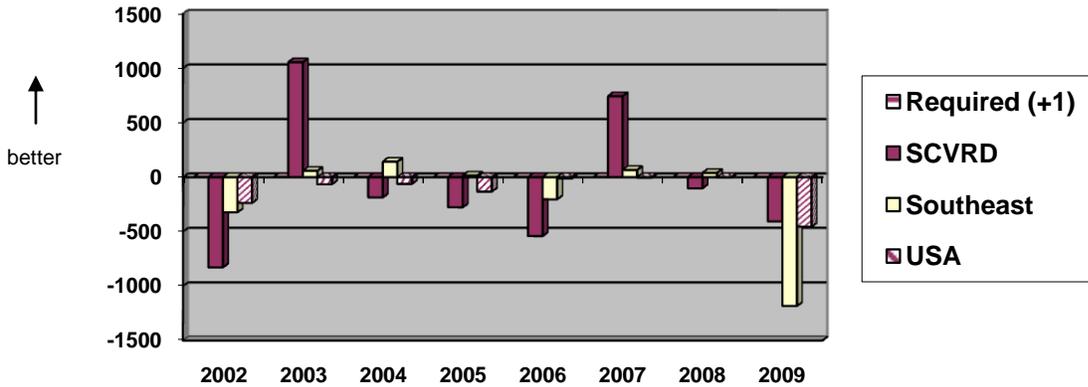


Fig. 7.1-4 Percentage of clients with employment outcomes

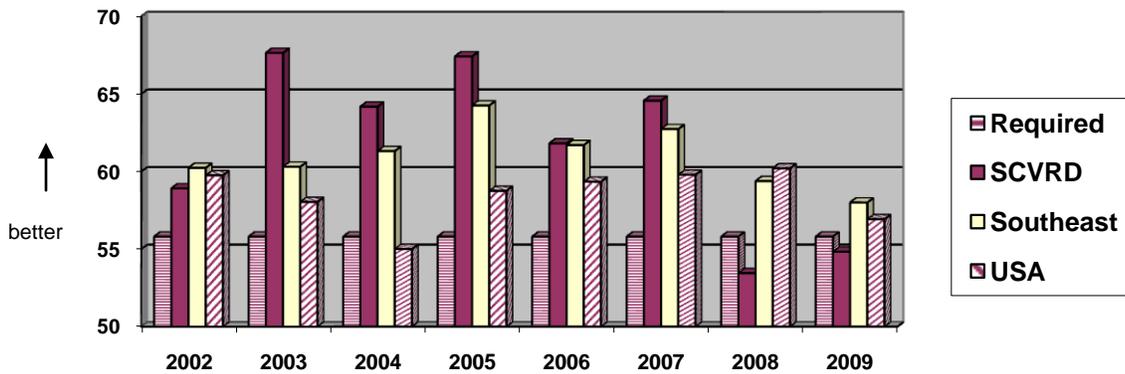


Fig. 7.1-5

Percentage of clients with employment outcomes who were competitively employed

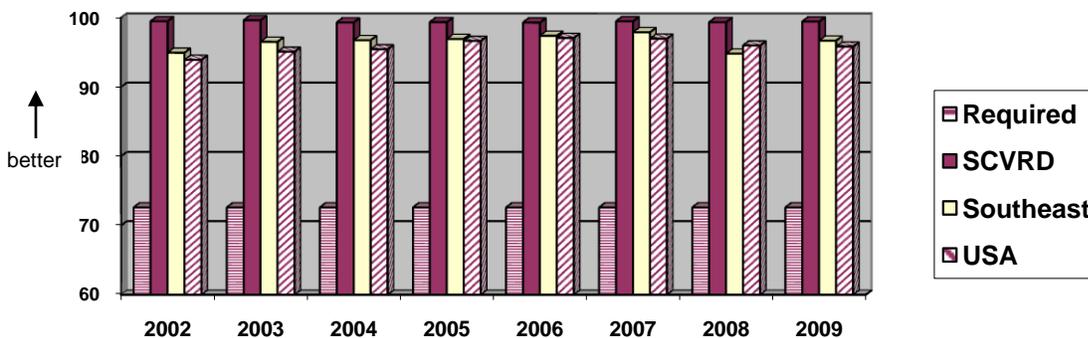


Fig. 7.1-6

Percentage of competitively employed clients having “significant” disabilities

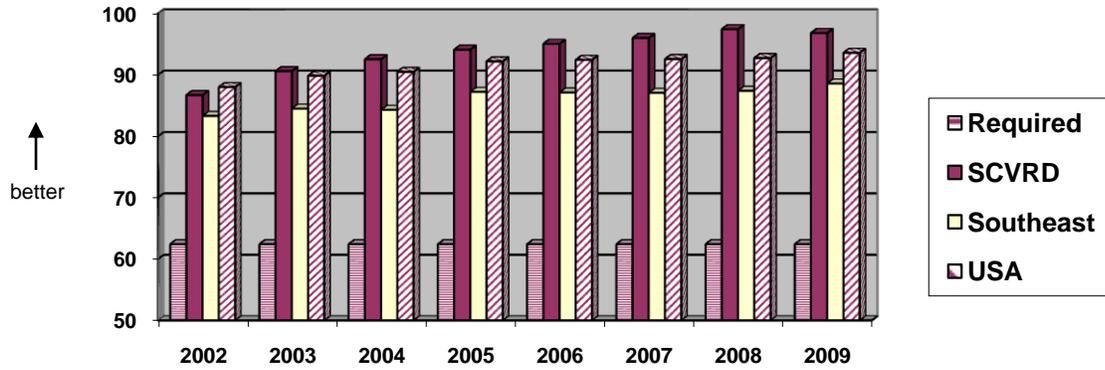


Fig. 7.1-7

Ratio of rehabilitated client wages compared to state average wage

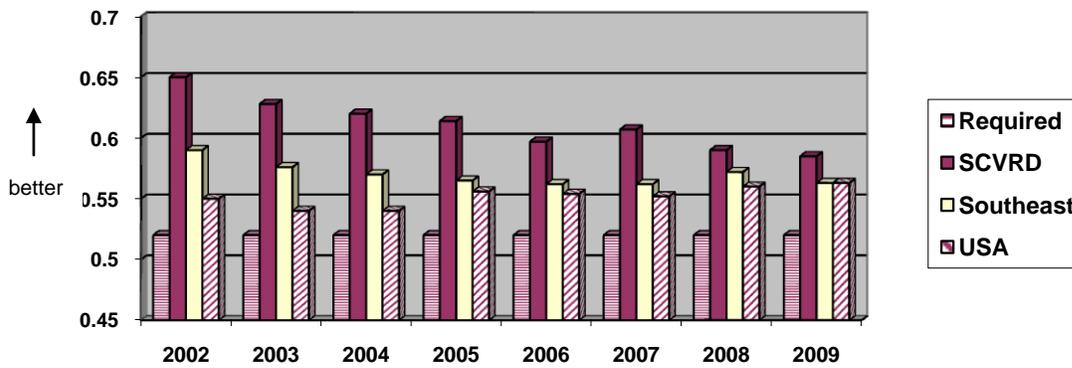


Fig. 7.1-8

Difference in percentage of clients self-supporting after services compared with before services

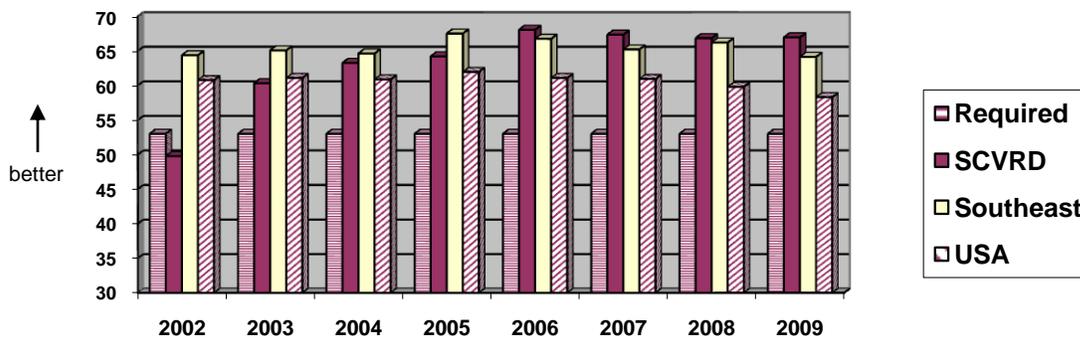


Fig. 7.1-9

Service rate for minority clients as ratio to non-minority

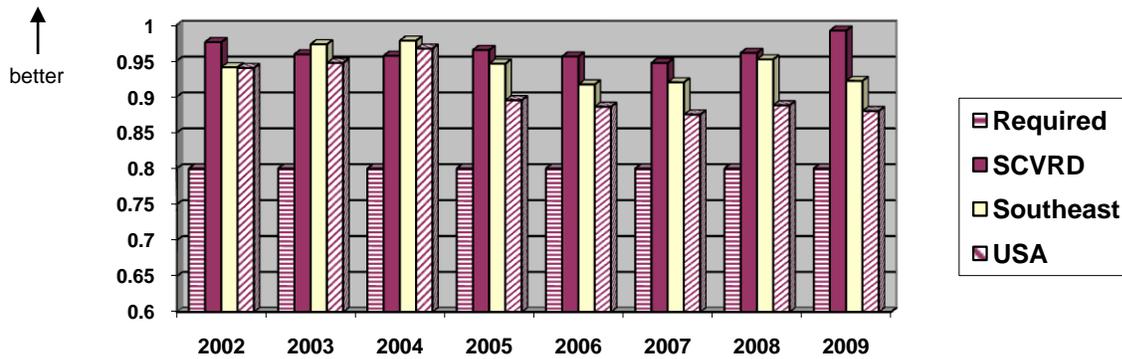


Fig. 7.1-10

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES (DDS)

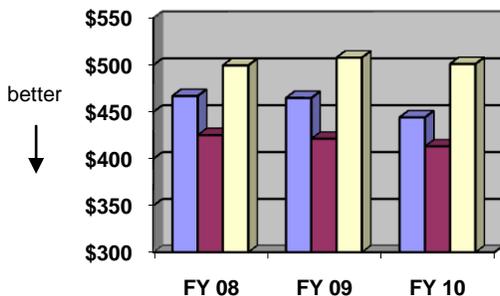
The Disability Determination Services (DDS) unit adjudicates disability claims for the Social Security Administration, the South Carolina Retirement Systems, the county auditors offices and the Department of Health and Human Services. DDS strives to achieve performance levels that are equal to or greater than the national average in the areas of productivity (number of claims produced for each FTE); cost per case; medical cost per case; processing time; and documentation accuracy.

During federal fiscal year 2009-2010 the Social Security Disability Determination Services will receive 87,000 and adjudicate more than 80,000 claims on more than 70,000 individual applicants for Social Security or SSI benefits. (Some individuals will apply for both programs at the same time.) These numbers have risen significantly in the past year, in excess of the

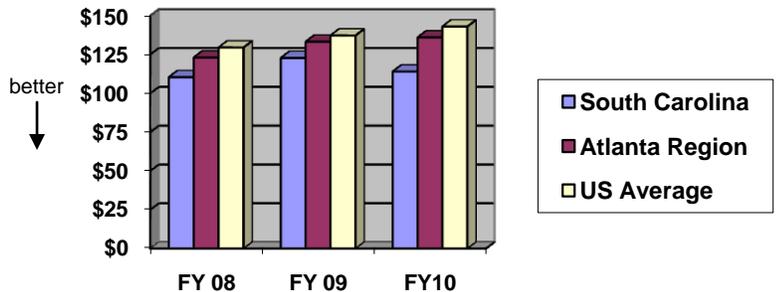
available adjudicative capacity thus impacting the overall processing time. In addition, approximately 2,000 claims for disability benefits under the South Carolina Retirement Systems, 11,000 claims for Medicaid Disability under the Department of Health and Human Services and approximately 100 applications under the disability provisions of the Homestead Exemption Act will be processed. This will result in more than 1,850 determinations per week with decisions reached in an average of 122 days or less. Through innovative approaches to case development and continued efforts to improve operational efficiency DDS expects to maintain or improve performance in key measurement areas.

The following measures show success rates for DDS’s Social Security adjudications in 2010.

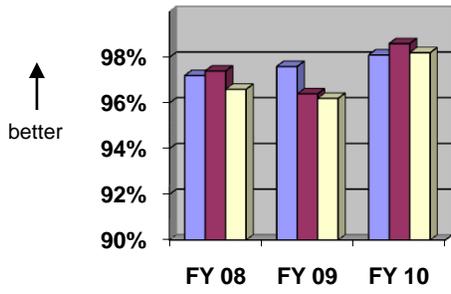
Social Security DDS Cost Per Case



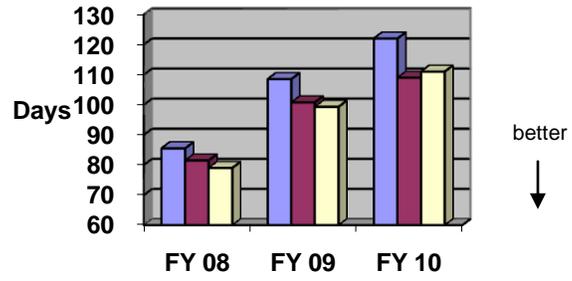
Social Security DDS Medical Cost Per Case



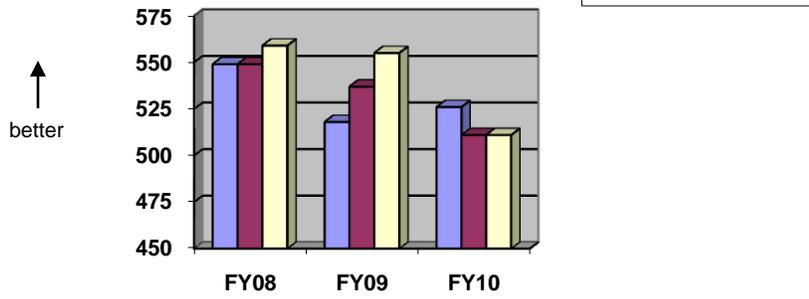
**Social Security
DDS Documentation Accuracy**



Social Security DDS Processing Time



**Production Per
DDS Disability Examiner
(cases per year)**



7.2 Customer Satisfaction

Fig. 7.2-1

PROGRAM INTEGRITY CUSTOMER SURVEYS

As part of the Program Integrity balanced scorecard, a variety of customer groups are surveyed each quarter to measure their satisfaction with the agency’s services, staff and effectiveness in meeting their needs. Customers were randomly selected from case files in all SCVRD area offices.

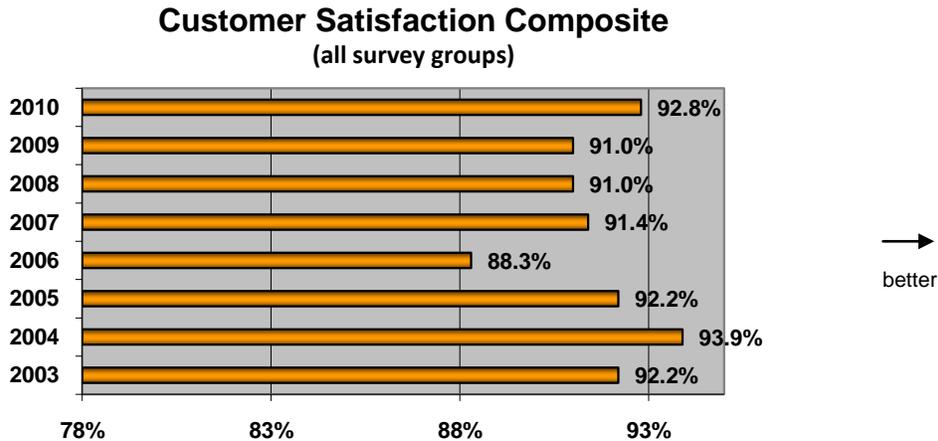


Fig. 7.2-2

FOLLOW UP SURVEYS OF REHABILITATED CLIENTS show a highly favorable assessment of SCVRD services. The department surveys a random sample of clients one year after their cases are closed (*therefore most recent data is from FY2009 closures*).

Year in which cases were closed:	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	FY2008	FY2009
Employed one year after closure	76%	78 %	70%	71%	67%
Counselor willingness to listen to client's ideas and suggestions in developing service plan	99%	97%	99%	99%	98%
Satisfied with adequacy of information about their disabilities	98%	96%	97%	97%	96%
Satisfied with promptness of service delivery	99%	96%	98%	99%	96%
Satisfied with kind of training received	92%	90%	94%	97%	91%
Satisfied with benefits of training received	95%	89%	92%	97%	88%
Satisfied with assistance in seeking job and finding employment	96%	92%	94%	94%	92%
Satisfied with results of physical restoration services	95%	91%	98%	98%	95%
Would recommend SCVRD to others	99%	98%	99%	98%	99%

Fig. 7.2-3

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

One of the Standards of Excellence centers on the formation of close ties with community resources of all types. These formal agreements lead to repeat business and positive referrals. The department's total rose to 963 during FY2010.

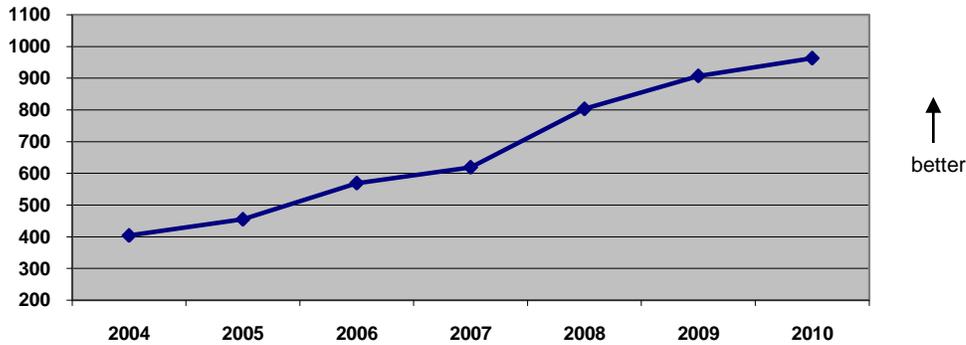


Fig. 7.2-4

NUMBER OF REFERRALS

Client referrals (new applicants) are vital as the department seeks to increase its impact on employment of citizens with disabilities.

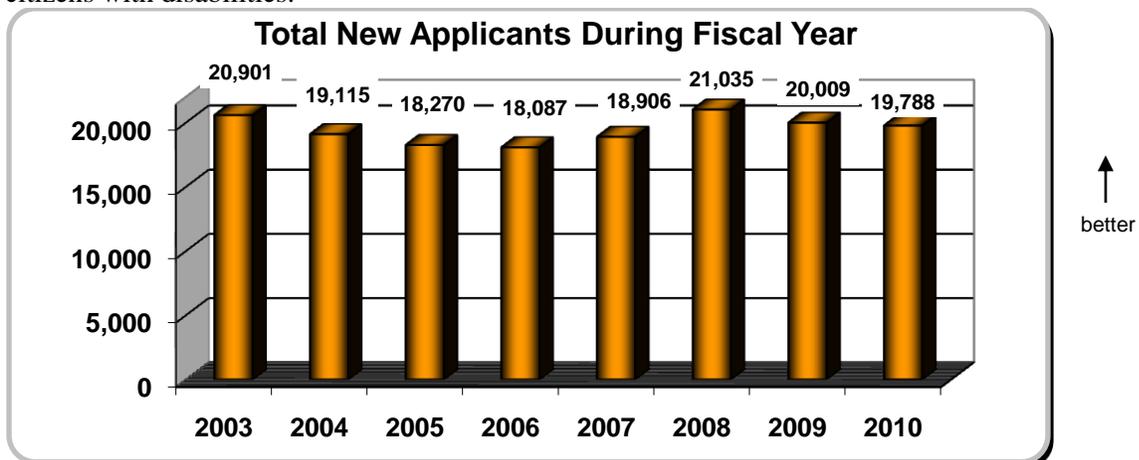
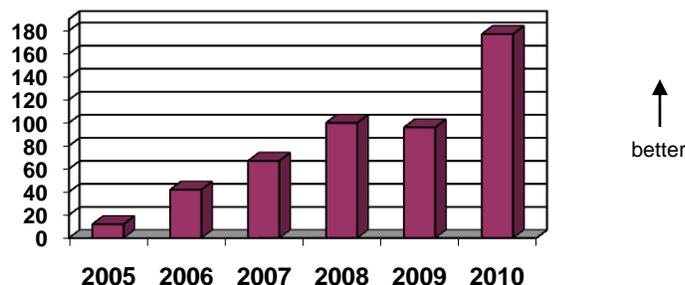


Fig. 7.2-5

VR BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

Training and employment opportunities for VR clients are greatly enhanced by strong partnerships between the agency and the state's business community. Members of this network go beyond outsource partnerships—they commit to furthering the cause of disability awareness and exemplary employment practices. The network has grown substantially and a new initiative with a local focus has begun.



7.3 Financial Performance

Fig. 7.3-1

AVERAGE COST PER CLIENT SERVED

SCVRD has consistently ranked among the nation’s best programs in the average cost per client served based on the agencies’ total expenditures. In federal FY2008 (most recent comparative data available), the department had the 11th lowest cost per client served (**\$1,759**) among state VR programs in the U.S. SCVRD also had the third-lowest average cost among the eight Southeastern regional states (Kentucky led at \$1,450). The states comprising the nation’s top 10% in performance had an average cost of \$1,475.

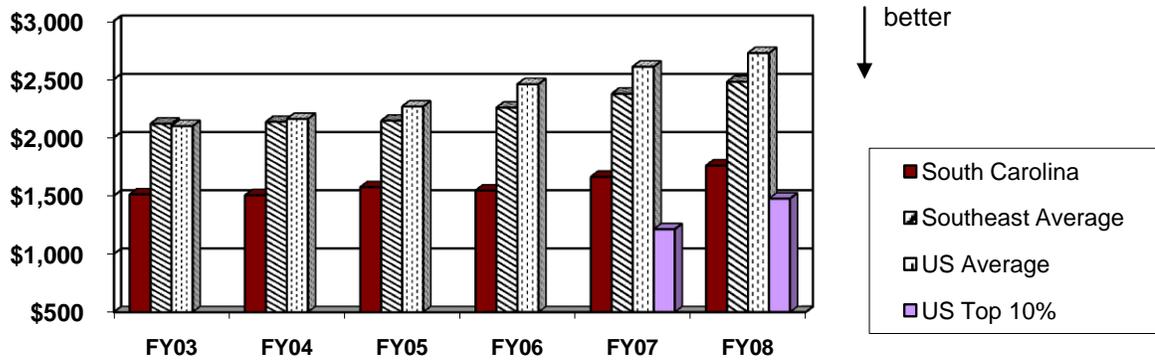
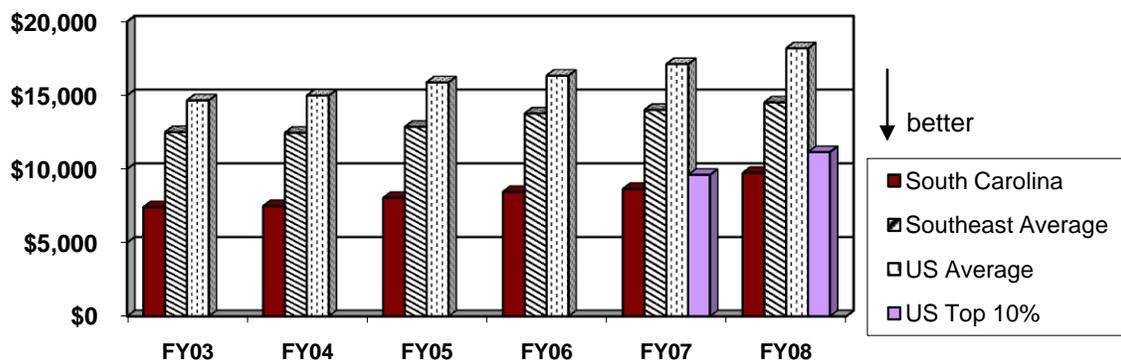


Fig. 7.3-2

AVERAGE COST PER CLIENT REHABILITATED

The department’s efficiency and effectiveness is reflected in its national prominence among VR agencies in cost per rehabilitation. For each successfully employed client in federal FY2008, the department’s average cost was **\$9,729, the third lowest in the entire nation**. Idaho was the lowest at \$7,525. The department was second in the Southeast region, narrowly trailing Alabama (\$9,666). The states comprising the nation’s top 10% in performance averaged \$11,145.



RETURN ON TAXPAYER INVESTMENT

SCVRD provides an excellent rate of return on resources invested in its clients. By becoming competitively employed, clients lessen their dependence on public assistance such as Social Security disability benefits, Medicaid, welfare, etc. Clients who become employed realize an increase in their earnings by **\$13.12** for every dollar of Vocational Rehabilitation Department funds invested in their rehabilitation. They return an estimated **\$3.33** in taxes for every dollar spent on their vocational rehabilitation. By paying taxes, they repay the cost of their rehabilitation in an average of **5.54 years**. Those figures do not include any additional cost savings from reduction in government benefits received by those clients. The figures are not yet updated for FY2010 due to unresolved issues in accessing some financial data from the state's new SCEIS system.

Fig. 7.3-3

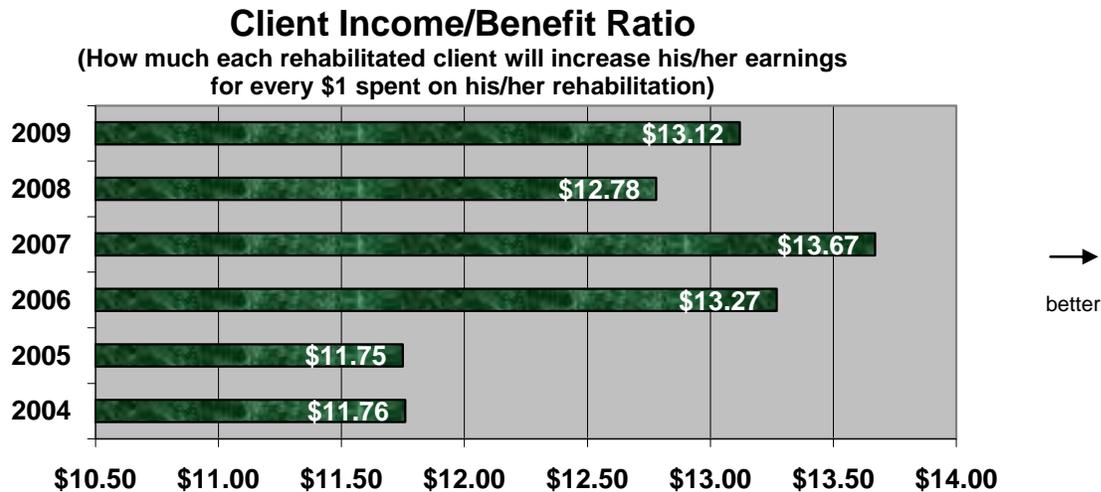


Fig. 7.3-4

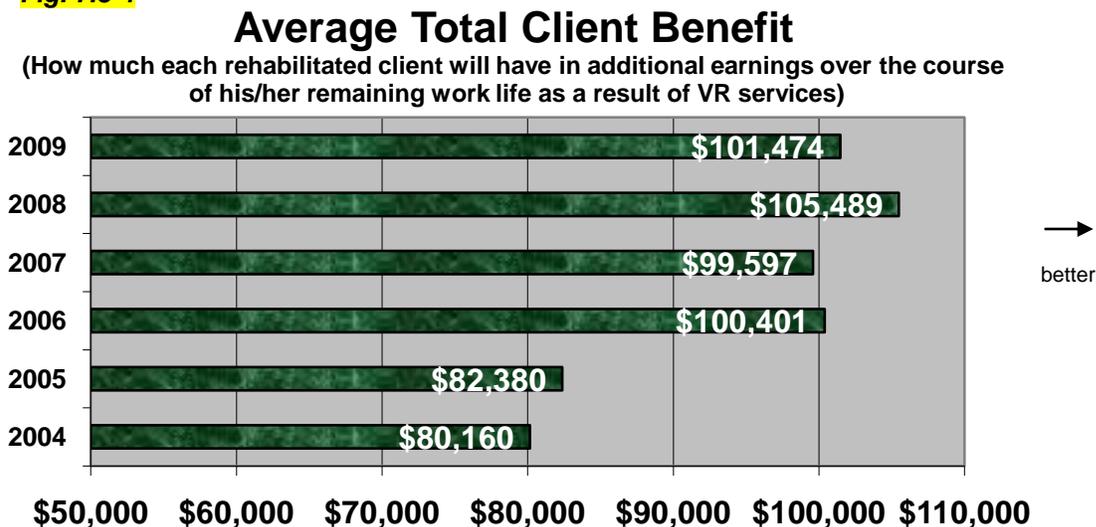


Fig. 7.3-5 Taxpayer Payback Cost/Benefit Ratio

(How much each rehabilitated client will pay back in taxes for each dollar spent on his/her VR services)

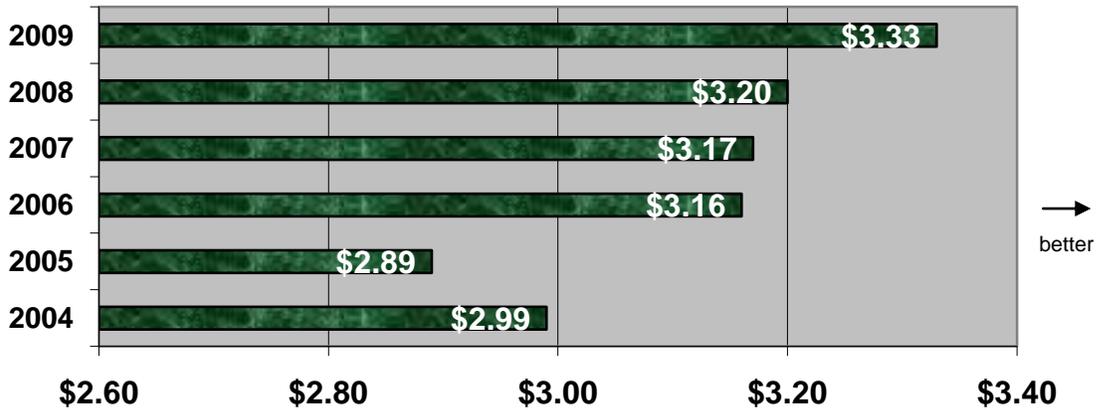


Fig. 7.3-6

Number of Years Required to Repay Cost

(The average number of years for a rehabilitated client to repay through taxes the cost of his or her VR services)

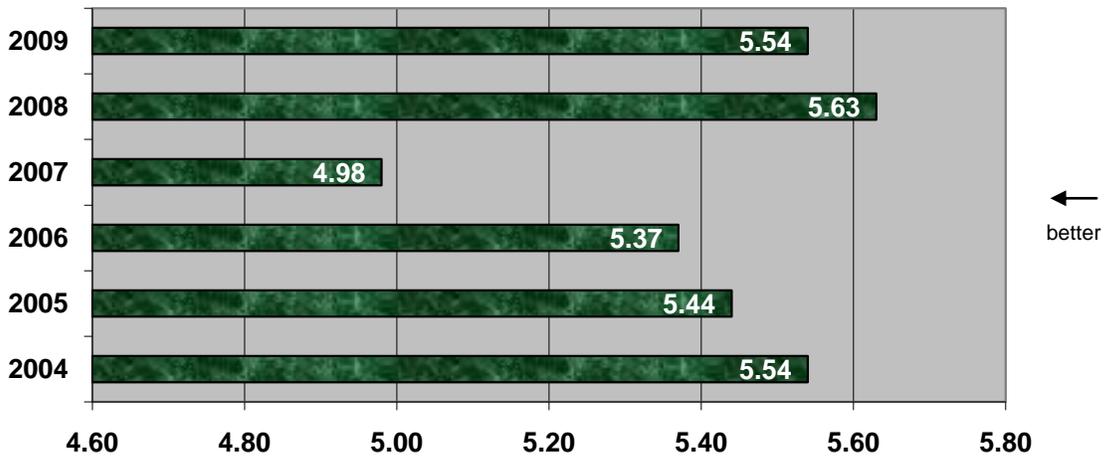


Fig. 7.3-7

Annual Rate of Return

(The percentage rate of return by dividing the annual return per client by the average cost per rehabilitation)

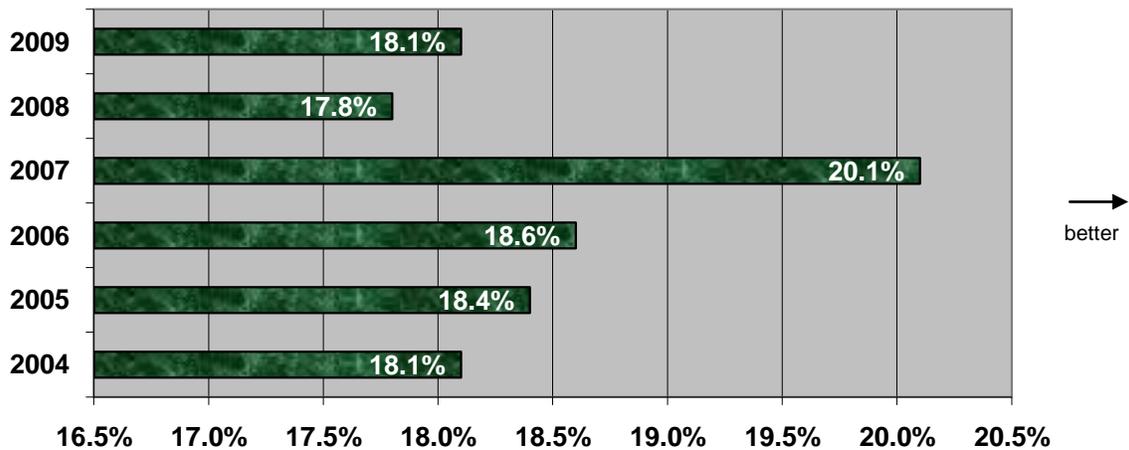


Fig. 7.3-8

WORK TRAINING CENTER REVENUES

Partnerships with South Carolina’s businesses and industries through more than 450 outsource agreements provide job readiness training opportunities for clients. The agreements generate revenues for SCVRD’s 24 work training centers. Some of the revenues are used as stipends for the clients who work on the contracts. The remainder is used for raw materials, supplies and other operating expenses. The economy’s downturn affected revenues for the training centers in FY2009 and FY2010.



Fig. 7.3-9

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

According to the most recent Rehabilitation Services Administration comparative statistics (FFY2008) SCVRD has the sixth lowest administrative cost percentage (6.72% using RSA’s formula) among state vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States. SCVRD has the second lowest in the Southeast region (Alabama is lowest at 6.32%)

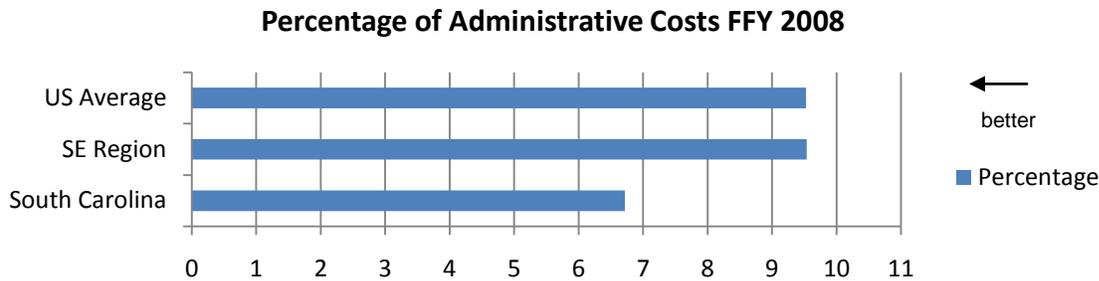


Fig. 7.3-10

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

A strategic objective is identification and acquisition of alternative funding sources. Current sources include:

YES Program (school-to-work transition)	U.S. Dept. of Education/OSERS	\$1,848,407 (over 5 yrs.)
Work Incentive Planning & Assistance Project	Social Security Administration	\$1,283,308 (over 5 yrs.)
In-Service Training Grant & Priority	U.S. Dept. of Education/RSA	\$1,202,173 (over 5 yrs.)
Upper Savannah Grant	S.C. Dept. of Commerce	\$107,021
South Carolina Telework Program	U.S. Dept. of Education/RSA	\$957,860
S.C. Assistive Technology Loan Program	U.S. Dept. of Education/RSA	\$542,285
Cooperative Services	S.C. Department of Juvenile Justice	\$31,160
Cooperative Services	S.C. Department of Mental Health	\$53,892
Cooperative Services	S.C. Department of Corrections	\$30,000
Cooperative Services	Berkeley-Dorchester School District	\$15,000
SSI/SSDI Reimbursements for Job Placements	Social Security Administration	\$631,088*

*this reimbursement changes from year to year based on SSI/SSDI closures. Figure shown is FY2010.

7.4 Workforce-Focused Outcomes

Fig. 7.4-1

EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING SURVEY

SCVRD has implemented a well-being survey that tracks employee job satisfaction rates. The survey includes 16 questions and is tracked by location and by position type. Satisfaction rates statewide remain steady, measuring at 3.82 on a scale of 5 during 2010:

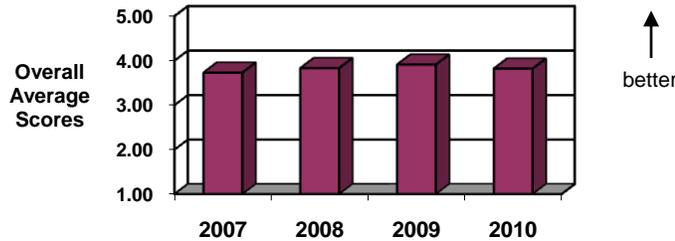


Fig. 7.4-2

STAFF RETENTION

SCVRD has typically retained employees at a better rate than other S.C. state agencies and the national average for state and local governments. An exception was 2006 when SCVRD had an unusually high number of retirements due to the TERI program (which had been anticipated and prepared for through PDLF). SCVRD had a 10% turnover rate in FY2010, compared with an 11% average for S.C. state government and 16% national average for state governments.

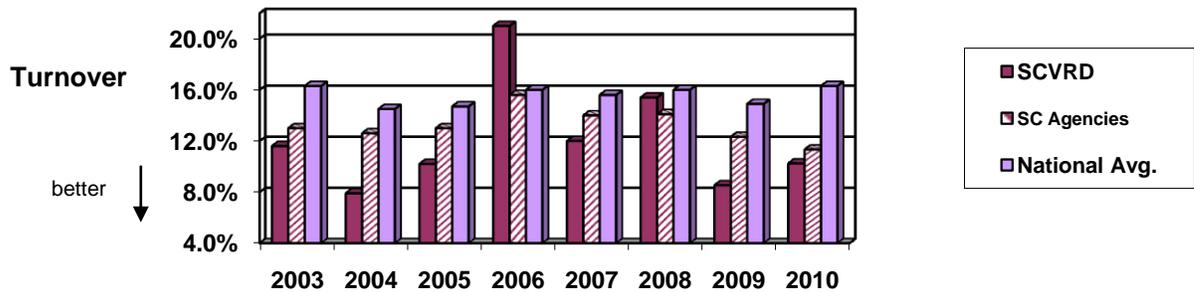
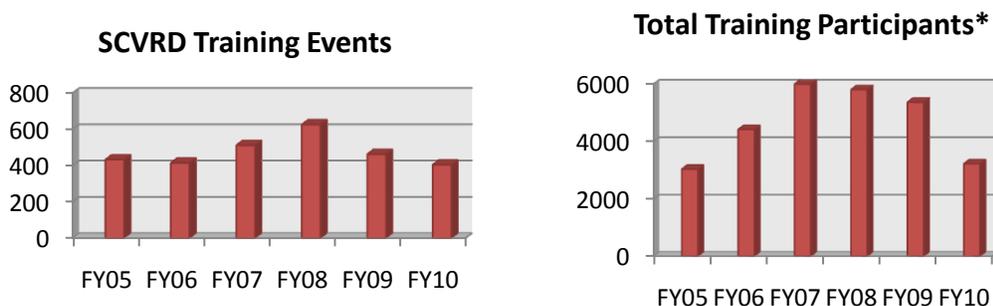


Fig. 7.4-3

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

The department provides its staff with a variety of training opportunities to address disability-specific issues as well as work strategies and skills, ethics, customer service, diversity, technology and other areas of professional development. In recent years the department has utilized videoconferencing to efficiently make training available to more staff members. Training event participation declined in FY2010 as a result of travel reductions and implementation of online training modules that employees could access from their desks.



* some staff members participated in more than one training event.

Fig. 7.4-4

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (PDLP)

The Professional Development and Leadership Program (PDLP) continues to develop staff for future opportunities within the department. This program is designed to prepare staff for future agency needs while providing them with opportunities for professional growth, development, and career enhancement. These employees participate in this program voluntarily while still maintaining their current job responsibilities. Participants are managing work projects as part of the program which serve as on-the-job leadership opportunities for the participants while at the same time assisting the department with some aspects of organizational performance enhancement or process improvement. *Of the graduates since the program was revised in 2007, 45 have now received promotions.*



Fig. 7.4-5

EXPERIENCE MODIFIER

A key business result for safety and risk management is the Experience Modifier (EMOD) measurement. SCVRD seeks to enhance the environment for its employees and clients by reducing accidents in its facilities, which in turn accomplishes a cost savings in workers' compensation premiums. SCVRD's recent safety performance has resulted in an average EMOD of 1.22 for FY2010. *Due to the agency's reduction in injuries over the past three years there has been a reduction of \$44,949 in its workers' compensation premium for 2010.* This decrease in premium is in spite of continued increases in medical costs nationwide.

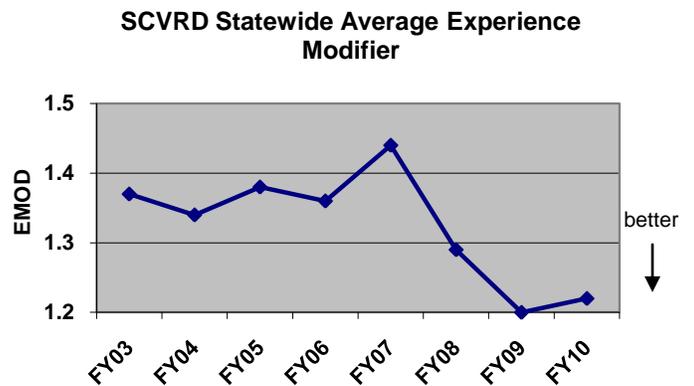
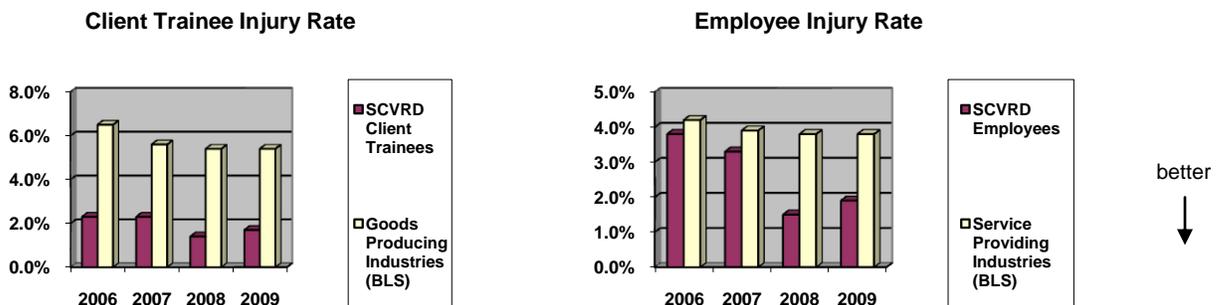


Fig. 7.4-6

WORKFORCE INJURY RATES

The agency's safety and risk management specialist conducts safety audits at least biennially at all locations. Safety teams throughout the state also monitor conditions and make suggestions to improve safety for clients and staff. Injury rates for both staff and paid work training center clients remain well below national industry rates.



7.5 Organizational Effectiveness/Operational Efficiency Results

Fig. 7.5-1

PROGRAM INTEGRITY RESULTS

Program Integrity, a model developed by SCVRD, is a key strategic objective which measures the balance in performance among three areas vital to the agency’s success—compliance with federal regulations and agency policy, customer service and satisfaction measures, and productivity. This index is a key indicator of the success of operational processes and is used to drive continuous improvement. The electronic case management system flags gaps in service provision process and can identify them by caseload or location. These rankings can be as specific as one caseload or area office and as broad as the statewide performance shown here.

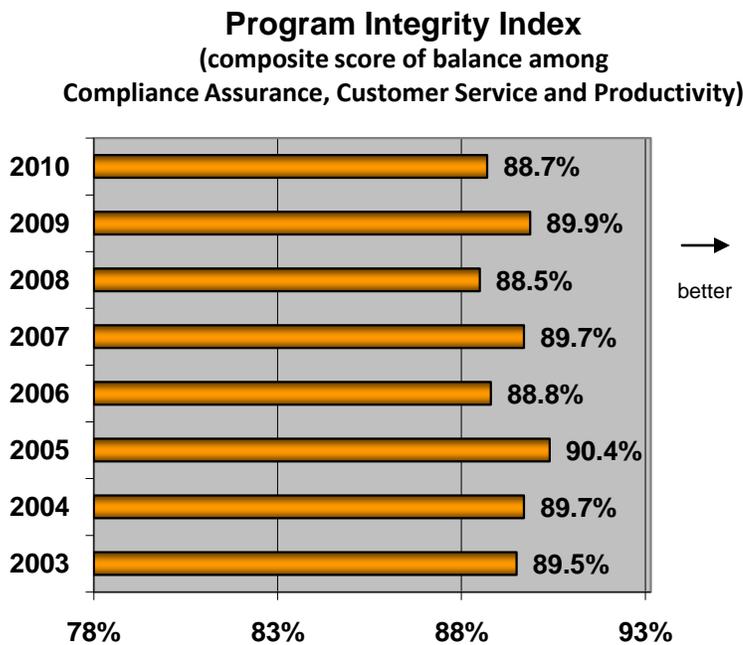


Fig. 7.5-2

SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION SERVICES

Enhancement of school-to-work transition services is one of the agency’s key strategic objectives addressed by senior leadership. People with disabilities who are ages 16 to 21 are underserved and at a critical point in their lives; if there is no transition into the workforce there typically begins a cycle of poverty and reliance on government benefits. SCVRD continues to increase staff resources for these services, through partnerships and grants (see Fig. 7.3-10).

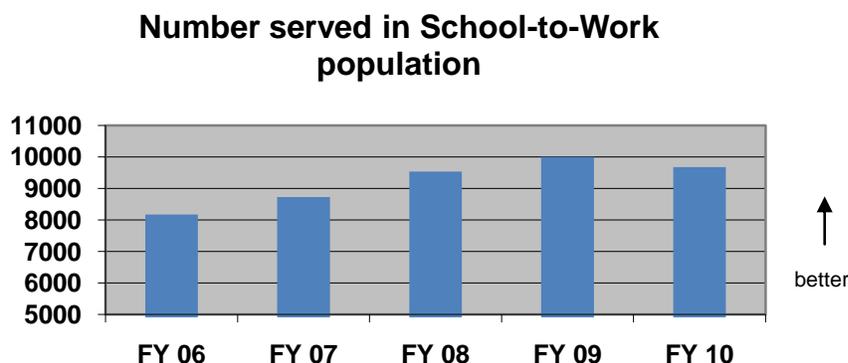
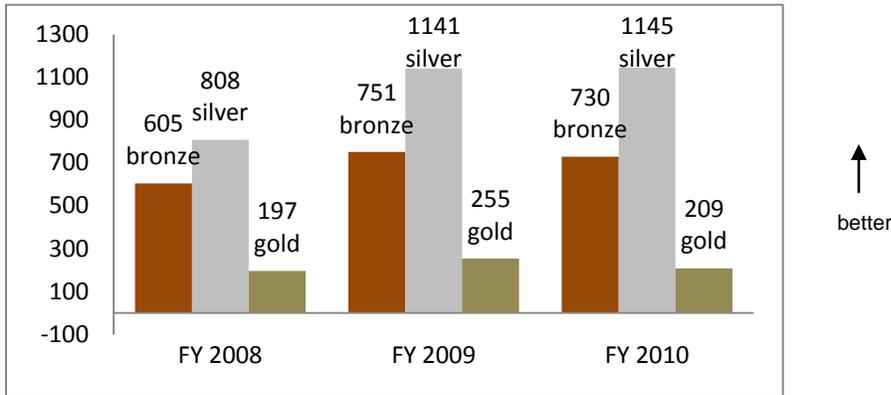


Fig. 7.5-3

WORKKEYS CERTIFICATION

The WorkKeys® Career Readiness Program further enhanced SCVRD clients' attractiveness to employers throughout the state. The program is conducted in collaboration with the Department of Education's Office of Adult Education and the Department of Commerce. Clients at SCVRD local facilities utilized a job skills assessment system that identifies skills gaps, improves job fitness, and enables efficient teaching/training. They receive a certificate recognized by many employers as an advantage in the hiring process. Certified skills levels range from bronze to gold.



7.6 Regulatory/Legal Compliance/Community Support

Fig. 7.6-1

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR/STAKEHOLDER TRUST

The department has not in the past decade had an employee grievance case reach the state employee grievance committee for action.

In its “Annual Report on Appeals Process” to the RSA, U.S. Department of Education, the department reported no new requests for mediation with SCVRD clients during the year and no disputes needing resolution in an impartial hearing process (formal administrative review). The client relations specialist, staff attorney, human resources department, commissioner’s office and the Client Assistance Program (CAP) in the Governor’s office work closely together to ensure ethical and fair treatment of agency clients before extreme measures would become necessary. The chart below shows that a high percentage of complaints against SCVRD by clients through CAP or other means are resolved by telephone/email without the need for a meeting. Despite the large number of clients served (more than 40,000 per year) the number of complaints registered with the client relations specialist remains relatively small—totaling 132 during FY2010.

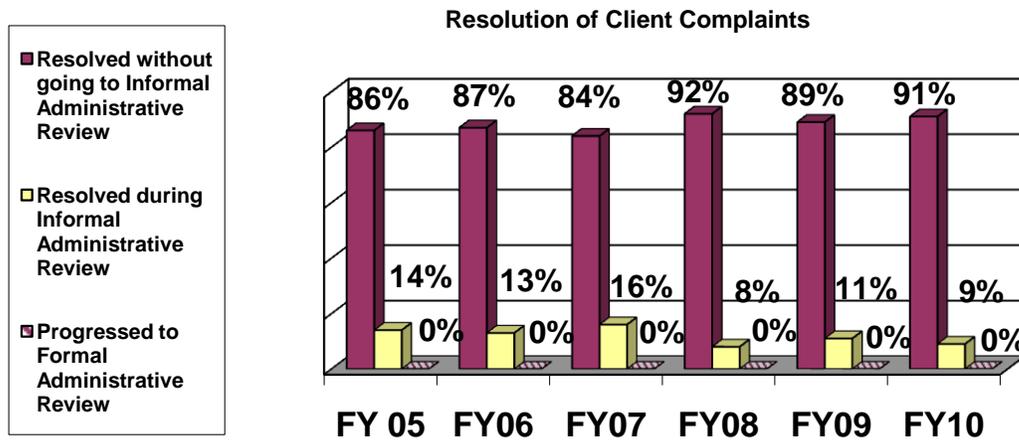


Fig. 7.6-2

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The department must adhere to budgeting and procurement codes, building codes, and various other state and federal regulations that any government agency would be subject to. Fiscal accountability is established through internal and external audits. Financial audits are conducted annually by the State Auditor’s office and any findings are addressed through corrective actions. A recently completed procurement audit was extremely favorable. The most recent benefits audit was also very positive. In the most recent single audit SCVRD showed only one reportable finding.

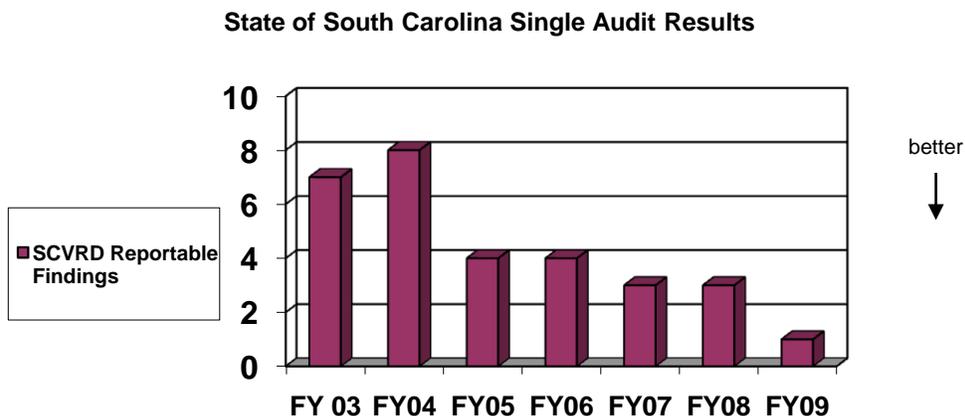


Fig. 7.6-3

COMPLIANCE

SCVRD must be compliant with regulations monitored by its parent agency, the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Compliance assurance comprises one-third of the Program Integrity Index. The department has a strong compliance record covering several years. However, further improvements are a priority and the agency has begun implementation of a long-range plan to centralize compliance assurance. This has enhanced compliance with federal regulations and policy, provided consistency, provided instant feedback to field staff, generated reports that show trends and areas of improvement, and provided a review of 100% of cases rather than a sampling. *During the first full year of centralized compliance the rate improved by 5.3%.*

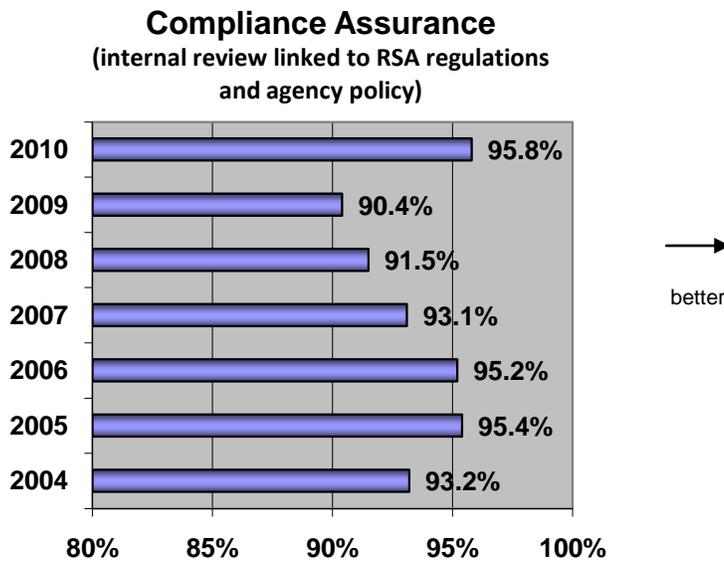


Fig. 7.6-4

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

SCVRD has strong relationships with key state agencies and disability-related organizations in communities throughout the state, as required by the Standards of Excellence. Staff members are assigned to maintain relationships and be involved in the organizations' initiatives, and SCVRD offers grants to associations for conferences when employment is a topic. SCVRD participates in the state's emergency preparedness plan by providing personnel and equipment in the event of an emergency, especially in the areas of crisis counseling and transportation.

The department has increased its collaborative efforts with private, non-profit organizations to expand its services to people with significant disabilities.

Community involvement is essential for SCVRD area supervisors and their staff. These contacts allow staff to spread the word about programs and encourage partnerships with businesses. Through involvement in local chamber of commerce

activities, legislative delegations, Rotary groups and other community organizations, SCVRD staff members consistently form bonds within their communities that lead to employment for clients.

The agency is also quite active in community assistance projects. Food is collected year-round for Harvest Hope Food Bank. Other activities include participation in The United Way; Salvation Army; Red Cross blood drives; Harvest Hope food drive, Lee Denim Breast Cancer fundraiser; Community Health Charities; Prevention Partner Wellness Walks; Walk for Breast Cancer; employee health screenings and vaccinations; adopted family efforts during the holidays; Toys for Tots; Haiti Red Cross fund drive; KAP(SS) for KID(SS); Lunch-n-Learn workshops on subjects such as hearing loss, anger management, and brain injury; Heart Healthy Month; Red Dress Days; National Disability Employment Awareness Month and National Disability Mentoring Day.